

BANDWAGON

JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1986



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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This Month's Cover

The 1916 program of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus had a lime green curtain with the words "Carl Hagenbeck" in yellow and "Circus" in red. The big top interior scene is in natural colors. This design was doubtless considered quite stylish in its day as it reflects the artistic sensibilities of the period. Measuring 8½" x 11" the program contains the usual insert with the actual program and local advertising while the bound portion of the book includes the national ads, and the usual boilerplate about the show. Original in Pfening Archives.

The President Comments

This issue of *Bandwagon* is a milestone as it begins the 26th year Fred Pfening Jr. has edited this publication. The last issue was his 150th, marking 25 full years under his guidance. While I concede a bit of prejudice in this matter, I believe a tribute is in order.

Much important original research on the circus has appeared in *Bandwagon* during

the past quarter century, so much so, in fact, that articles from the journal are cited in virtually every scholarly book and bibliography published on the circus. Many research libraries subscribe to the magazine, and it would seem impossible to write on circus history without consulting *Bandwagon*.

Throughout the years, the magazine has been consistently attractive. A journalism student at Ohio State University and editor of the college humor magazine, Pfening has brought a strong background in the graphic arts and magazine layout to the *Bandwagon*, giving it a professional look and a continuity of style. Many covers would do any mass circulation magazine proud. His energy and vision have created what I believe is the finest circus publication ever. Nepotism notwithstanding, anyone who does that for a quarter century deserves a little recognition.


On another note, I encourage everyone to take a Christmas greeting ad in our next issue. It's an inexpensive way to spread the spirit of the season, and to help the organization.

Fred Pfening III

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Circus World Museum
is offering for sale a 1987 calendar featuring
12 colorful circus wagons for a cost of
\$4.95. Send a check to:

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426 Water Street
Baraboo, WI 53913

The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art announces the creation of the position,

CIRCUS GALLERIES PROJECT CURATOR

The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art enjoys an extensive collection of circus material which includes graphic art, artifacts, and memorabilia. The collection is housed and exhibited in the Circus Galleries, a 37,500 sq. ft. building.

The Museum has committed \$450,000 to the renovation of the Circus Galleries and the reinstallation of its circus collection. It is expected that the project will be completed within two years.

The Circus Galleries Project Curator will be responsible for developing and implementing the Museum's plans for the renovation of the Circus Galleries and the reinstallation of its circus collections. The appointment will be made at the rank of "Curator" and he/she will report to the Director of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.

A permanent position of Curator of Circus Collections will be established, once the renovation project is complete.

Qualifications for the position include a Master of Arts degree in a field directly related to the history, social history or art history of the American circus, and significant experience in the exhibition of historical artifacts.

The salary for the position will depend upon experience (minimum is \$26,000) and will be funded by the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Foundation.

Qualified individuals may apply to the personnel office of the Museum. Applications arriving after November 15, 1986, may not be considered.

Ringling Museum of Art, 5401 Bayshore Rd., Sarasota, FL. 34243.

Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus

The Big 1916 Season

By Gordon Carver

The end of the 1915 season saw the return of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus to its original home in Indiana. Although Edward Ballard provided the bulk of the money to buy the show from Benjamin E. Wallace during the 1913 season he remained somewhat in the background until the 1916 season. In July of 1915 it was announced that the Hagenbeck show would winter in West Baden, Indiana at the close of the season. Property Ballard owned midway between West Baden and French Lick was selected as the site for the new circus winter quarters. Ballard was building a new home on the property and a number of buildings were constructed to house the circus a short distance from the home. The rural location was on the east side of the road connecting the two towns.

Charles Edward Ballard was a most interesting individual who exemplified a classic rags to riches life. He amassed great wealth during his life time and then suffered a tragic death. Born in a log cabin June 28, 1873 he grew up in West Baden. After completing the fourth grade he quit school to become a pin setter in the bowling alley of the West Baden Springs Hotel. During his sixteenth year he became a rural mail carrier, riding a horse over the countryside. When he was twenty he left the postal service and became a bartender in a saloon where he quickly set up a poker game in the back room. This was the start of a gaming career that made him a millionaire by the time he was thirty. Lee W. Sinclair, owner of the West Baden Springs Hotel, made Ballard manager of the hotel's casino. From there he moved to the Brown Club, a casino in French Lick at the time considered one of the most popular gambling spots in the midwest.

In due time he purchased the casino. During the next few years Ballard prospered financially and invested in considerable real estate and farm land in the West Baden-French Lick area. West Baden was becoming the Monte Carlo of the North America with wealthy gamblers arriving in private railroad cars. Ballard's star was rising and he operated clubs in Hot Springs, Miami Beach, Saratoga and Mackinac Island. The seasons differed and he sent his regular dealers from location to location. A hometown boy made good, Ballard was respected by the people of West Baden. Seven years after Sinclair's death in 1916 Ballard purchased the West Baden Springs Hotel from Sinclair's daughter. He remained a prominent bachelor until 1913, the same year he purchased a large interest in the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus.

Ballard's home and the winter quarters buildings were completed about the same time in the fall of 1915. The farm tract covered around one hundred acres. There was ample room for the show in quarters that



Edward Ballard, owner of the Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. Photo courtesy of Charles E. Ballard.

covered about the size of two city blocks. The quarters were comprised of an office building, a large wagon shed, a heated brick animal barn, a ring training barn and various other structures. The seven or eight buildings were all of wooden construction ex-

The West Baden Springs Hotel as it appeared on a 1910 post card. Ed Ballard owned the hotel from 1916 to 1934. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.



cept for the brick animal barn. The Ballard home was about 150 feet from the circus buildings.

During the 1915 season Ballard took over controlling interest in the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus and he then brought the show home, where it would remain until 1928. For unknown reasons Ballard favored the Hagenbeck name and by early 1916 it appeared that the show would open in the spring as the Carl Hagenbeck Circus. A new letterhead was printed with the title. When the show opened the printed program cover and a courier carried the title. However the inside of the program and the courier carried the title Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. All newspaper ads used during the 1916 season used the full title. Apparently the Wallace name was too strong to be left out.

The winter of 1916 was uneventful, but by early spring activity began to get the show ready for the new season. The quarters were open to the public free of charge. Ballard was anxious to share his enterprise with the citizens of the area. All of the tableau wagons and cages were worked over and repainted to put them in first class shape for the parades to come, a particular necessity considering the sometimes negative comments made about them during the preceeding season. Similarly all of the baggage wagons were repainted and repaired placing them in first class condition.

Jake Posey who was again boss hostler for the draft stock was busy keeping the horses active during the winter. The draft stock was kept on another nearby Ballard farm. An order was placed with the U. S. Tent Company in Chicago for an entirely new set of canvas which was, with only a couple of ex-

ceptions, the same type and sizes the show had used in 1915.

Early in April an article appeared in the *Billboard* announcing that the Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus would open April 22 in Mitchell, Indiana. The story advised that the winter had been one of the busiest ever experienced around the show, as radical innovations had been made in almost every department. Charles E. Cory, the manager, announced that everything would be in readiness for the premiere. The No. 1 advance car, managed by J. E. Eviston, was in Cincinnati billing the city for April 24 and 25. The story further stated that the steady growth by the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus during the past ten years, and particularly the past several seasons, was enough to warrant the statement that the big show would not only be one of the largest on the road, but would likewise distinctly differ from the old type of a circus performance.

The article continued: "The draft horses and ring stock that have been wintering on the farm of Edward Ballard near French Lick Springs are back in the stables again. R. M. Harvey, advance manager, who sprang a decidedly new advertising system last season, has added another one this year which promises to be equally as successful. All of the bosses are now at the winter quarters, and the workingmen are reporting daily. The cookhouse is again in charge of James and Vic Davis, as for many years past. Dutch Ricardo and wife, who were associated with the late Frank Bostock and the Hagenbecks in Germany as wild animal trainers, have arrived in quarters from their home in California. Ricardo has been working during the winter for a motion picture company in Los Angeles.

"The big show will travel in three sections this year, as has been the case for several years. The cars are now in winter quarters, after being overhauled and painted in the Monon shops at Lafayette, Indiana. Floyd King, general press agent, was at the quarters last week. Sam Dill, show auditor, is busy exploring the highways and byways around the Springs during his leisure time in his new car. The winter quarters have been a point of interest to a thousand or more guests daily at the hotels in French Lick and West Baden Springs."

The 1916 route book contained an article titled, "A Promising Opening." The first paragraphs read as follows, "The Carl Hagenbeck Circus opened its 1916 season two day earlier than it did the previous season and in a different locality. For the first time in its history the show wintered in its new quarters, located midway between French Lick and West Baden, Indiana. Under the personal supervision of Mr. Ed Ballard, the principal owner of the show, several brick buildings had been erected and a splendid start made toward the building of what is destined to be one of the most complete and ideal quarters ever used by a circus. Each year will see added improvements made to these buildings and quarters.

"The location of the winter quarters of this show is ideal in every respect as far as enabling the winter's work to be easily accomplish-



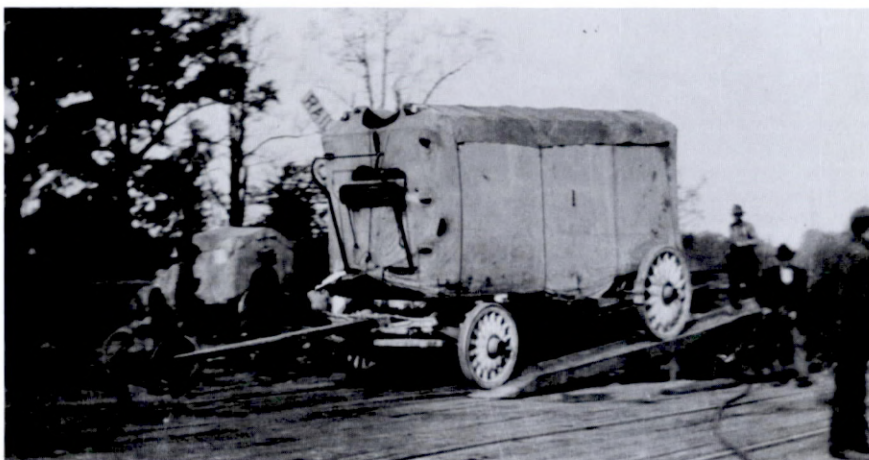
The 1916 Hagenbeck-Wallace train pulling into town. Ralph Miller photo.

ed. To this advantage may be added that of the presence of thousands of tourists and visitors to the famous resorts of French Lick and West Baden every winter, as these people will all become acquainted with the show as they see it in winter quarters, which means that they will have an increased interest in this circus wherever they may chance to see it en route during the summer."

When the show pulled out of quarters to open the 1916 season it was indeed a large circus, traveling on fifty-nine cars, six more (three stocks and three flats) than the prior season. The Hagenbeck-Wallace show had never been so large and would never again be. Only the Barnum & Bailey show on eighty-five cars and the Ringling Bros. on eighty-two cars were larger. The only other show on the road in 1916 that approached it in size was Sells-Floto on forty-two cars. The show train consisted of 2 advance cars, 2 box cars, 14 stock cars, 28 flat cars and 13 sleepers. Part of at least one sleeper contained a dining car, far more extensive than the "pie cars" carried on smaller circuses.

Mitchell, Indiana, was the location selected for the dress rehearsals and preliminary opening on April 22. It was a

A Carl Hagenbeck canvas covered cage coming down the runs during the 1916 season. Ralph Miller photo.



small rural southern Indiana town of about 3,000, about 25 miles from West Baden. It is a puzzle to understand how a show the size of Hagenbeck-Wallace, with a six pole big top, could find such a small town profitable and yet many such small communities were played successfully during the season. Essentially dress rehearsals, the performances were fairly well attended in spite of adverse weather and muddy roads leading into town. Of course, the latter statement, "muddy roads leading into town" gives a clue to the success of the show in being able to play small towns. It was the outlying farm population that the show depended upon for much of its audiences. This is further corroborated by the fact that in these small rural communities the afternoon shows had the bigger crowds and occasional turnaways. It was the farmers who provided these for they often had long drives in their horse drawn wagons and buggies (the auto not yet being so widely owned by farmers) to get home after seeing the show, a trip that was not practical after dark.

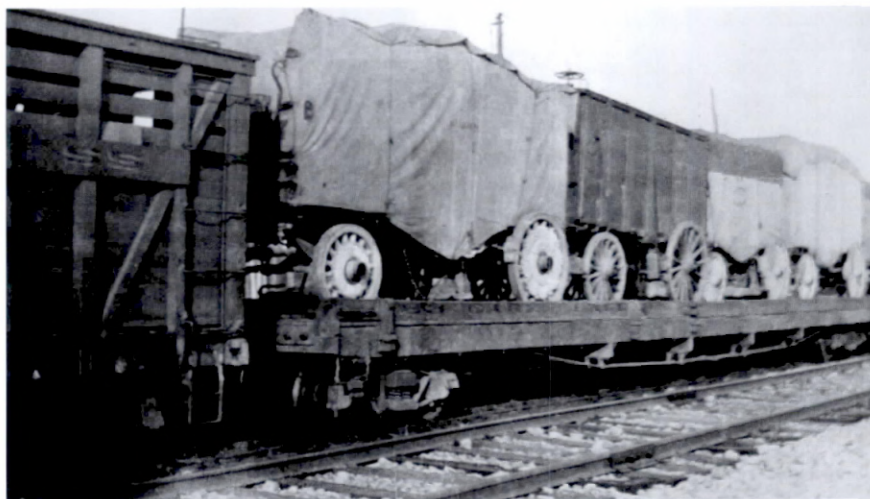
All went well and the program was rendered as if the troupe had been en route for weeks. From the start the show was a very heavy one, there being a superfluity of acts, the dressing rooms being so crowded that performers were in each other's way, according to the route book. A very large number of distinguished guests came from French Lick and West Baden to attend the initial performance.

After Mitchell the show packed up Saturday night. This being the first teardown of the season it was a little slow but with all day Sunday, if needed, to make the ninety mile run to Cincinnati there was no problem. Cincinnati was a two day stand, but actually in two different locations, one in Cumminsville and the other in the suburb of Norwood. At the Cumminsville matinee there was runaway business with crowds at the remaining Cincinnati performances promising to be good and getting the show off to a fine start on the season. The performance and the parade were pronounced by the local press as the best ever presented by the Hagenbeck show, possibly by any circus. The new electric light plant was tried out in Cincinnati for the first time. During the night show in Norwood the lights went out for fifteen seconds while high perch act was on and consequently a couple of the performers fell, but were not seriously injured. The same night a cloud-burst brought unusual grief upon the show, which was not yet organized in its workmen's department and made it impossible for it to be loaded that night, causing the show to loose the next date at Middletown, Ohio.

The big top was slightly wider and longer than in former years. It was a 165 foot round top with five 50 foot middle pieces, whereas in 1915 it had been a 160 foot with three 50s and two 40s. However it is doubtful if this increase in size accommodated more than 400 to 500 additional patrons, if that.

Certainly it was a big show, not too far behind either the Barnum or Ringling shows. The show used stock and flat cars of tie-rod wooden construction sixty feet long. All indications are that the show traveled regularly in two sections, although occasionally in hilly country it used three sections.

After Cincinnati and the lost Middletown date the show played Springfield, Xenia and Delaware, Ohio. The second week starting May 1, they showed in Wooster and Alliance, Ohio and then moved to Pennsylvania for a day in New Castle before returning to Ohio at Warren. Youngstown, played on May 5 brought problems for the show. At the last minute the lot was changed when it was discovered that the original lot was too wet, creating confusion for the fans who arrived at the scheduled lot to see the show set up. After leaving the new lot the parade was held up when a cage wagon broke down. The jinx continued when the second lot turned out to be very soft causing a delay in getting off it and to the runs. Finally after the flats were loaded about the middle of the following morning two flat cars jumped the track. After a couple of hours to replace the cars the show was ready to move at noon. By this time the Sharon engagement had been cancelled. The officials breathed a sigh of relief and gave the instructions to go ahead, and the first train started. That was all, for no sooner had the start been made than a large cage toppled off a car, blocking the Lake Shore right of way. It was late in the afternoon before this wreckage could be cleared away. The Youngstown paper in reporting the show's problems stated that the hard luck suffered by the show in that city was a repetition of

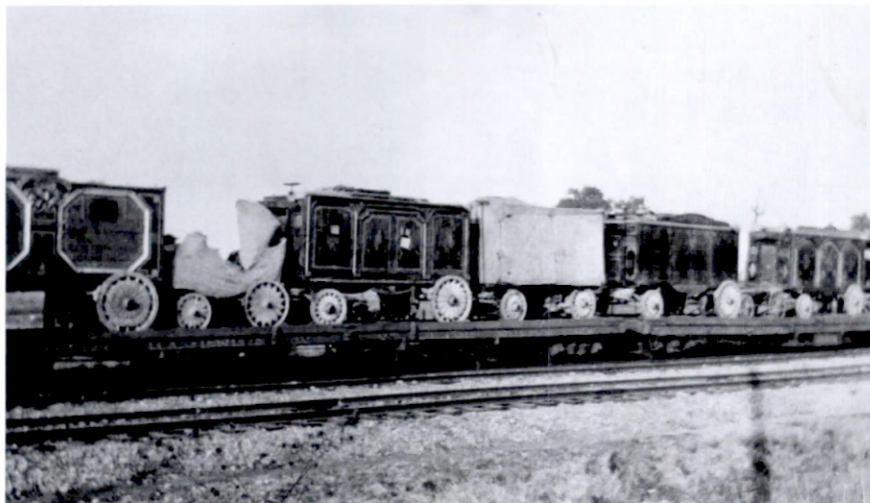


The end of a stock car is shown with one of the sixty foot loaded flats of the Hagenbeck show in 1916. Ralph Miller photo.

problems all week. It stated that when the show had played New Castle, Pennsylvania, on May 3 striking canvasmen had held the show over until the next day, causing Warren, Ohio to be lost. A car had been derailed on the way to Youngstown. Two blown dates in the first week of the season did not get the 1916 tour off to a very good start.

Accounts of the parade said it was "Unusually well dressed," all the trappings being new and of high quality, while wagons sparkled in new paint and gold leaf, many having been rebuilt and redecorated in quarters. No where has a parade list been published to our knowledge. However, since the show was nearly the same size as in 1915 and with no record of new wagon acquisitions in the off season we can assume that the parade was essentially the same as in the prior year. There were probably the same fif-

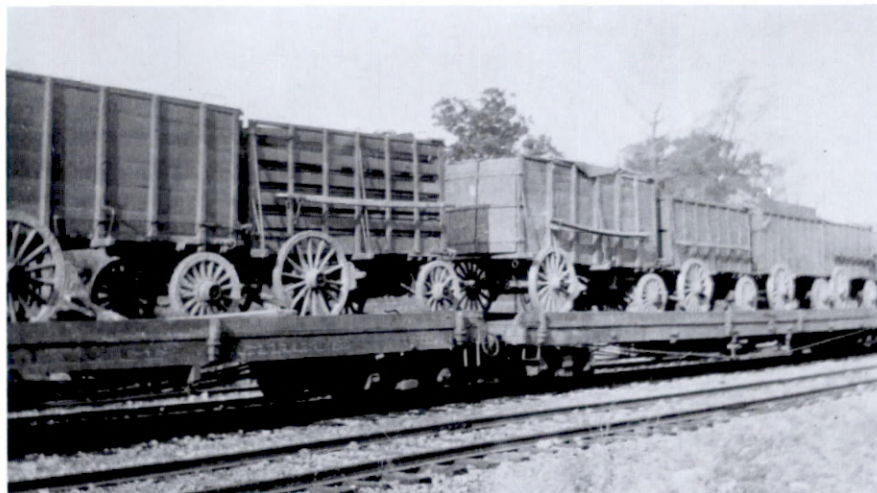
A number of the Bode cages made for the 1905 Carl Hagenbeck show are pictured, as well as the small Wallace shell bandwagon, second from left. Ralph Miller photo.



teen cages and seven band and tableau wagons and the same shell air calliope along with the steam calliope. With ten elephants, camels and other lead stock together with five or six mounted groups including a large wild west contingent, the show presented a very outstanding street spectacle.

The week of May 8 was spent in Connellsville, Washington, Butler, Kittanning, Indiana and Charlot, Pennsylvania, thus skirting but not touching Pittsburgh. The same held true when Chester and West Chester were played just outside, but not in Philadelphia, a week or so later. This was the farthest east the show would play before starting to move westward towards its home territory, the favorite midwest towns. Most of the moves in Pennsylvania were fairly short, in the 50 to 60 mile range.

The route book stated "The month of May will go down in circus history as the most lamentable month ever put in by any circus on the road. All records for troubles with the movements of every circus on the road were beyond belief and could not be appreciated by the layman. Sudden and without warning every circus management in the country was brought face to face with one of the unexpected results of too much prosperity [in the country]. That which had been looked upon as certain to make this a record-breaking



year in point of receipts proved to be the undoing, at least temporarily, of every one of the large circuses and completely wrecking some of the smaller ones."

It was soon evident that the labor question was difficult as far as circuses were concerned. As if conspiring to increase the annoyances of the business managers, the weather was unusually severe with an unprecedented amount of rainfall. This condition discouraged the new recruits, so that they would not remain even for a day, and it was up to the old hands to fight it out. This they did manfully, week after week, until gradually the labor troubles were overcome. The newspapers persisted in publishing reports of "strikes" with various shows. Not a circus had a strike. The whole trouble was in fact that laboring men were scarce. It was a condition that tried and tested the loyalty of the men of all departments of the shows and also the gameness of the circus managers. The unusual troubles of the 1916 season did not play favorites—every show had the same troubles and every one of them was confronted with the same unusual problems. As the route book said: "When opportunity offered the business was very big, indicating that the anticipation of the great season's business would have been realized other more favorable physical and weather conditions."

At Ridgeway on June 5, although a Monday stand, only one show was given because the lot was so bad the show felt it would be too difficult to get off. If they had waited until night to move off and loaded they would be badly delayed at Punxsutawney the following day. Two days later at Clearfield there was more rain while the following day at Dubois the town was lost altogether because of a muddy lot. More rain met the show in Kane the following day. To that point in the season the show had had only ten out of forty-two days without rain, a horrible record. Yet business continued to be good. The show played one stand in New York at Dunkirk, then left Pennsylvania for good in Greenville on June 16.

On the lot the Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus made a most striking appearance, all tents, seats, poles and other equipment being new and brightly painted. All the baggage wagons are believed to have been

The wooden flat cars carried the title of the show during the 1916 season. Ralph Miller photo.

orange, as they appear to be a dark color in photos. The big top interior was lighted by thirty-six carbon arc lights providing better lighting than had ever before been achieved and when seen at night from the outside gave the big top an opalescent appearance that was very striking. To supply electricity for these lights two generators, each mounted on its own wagon, were used. These were new to the show. The generators also provided light to the side show, midway and menagerie. In the menagerie the interior of all cages were

This attractive newspaper ad was probably designed by press agent Floyd King for the 1916 tour of the Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. The small type in the lower right hand corner reads, "Operatic concert by Prof. Jewell's Band of 45 soloists 30 minutes preceeding each performance."

Ottumwa, Tues., Sept. 19 Biggest Circus in the World

Only big show coming to Ottumwa this season—Reserved and admission tickets on sale circus day at Sargent's Drug Store at exactly the same prices as charged on the show grounds.

NEWLY GATHERED CIRCUS WAGONS

CARL HAGENBECK WALLACE CIRCUS

GREATEST OF ALL SHOWS!

NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT IN ALL EARTH'S HISTORY

\$3,000,000 Actual Capital Invested

3 - R. R. Trains - 3 - 400 - Performers - 400
50 - Clowns - 50 - 3 - Herds of Elephants - 3
500 - Horses - 500 - 400 - Wild Animals - 400
22 - Tents - 22 - 8 - Military Bands - 8
200 - Acts, Features and Sensations - 200

CARL HAGENBECK'S Trained Wild Animals from Hamburg, Germany.
1,000 Vipers, Killing 3 Kings, 2 Horses, Steel Axes, Hippodrome and some of the world's biggest tent.

IS PRIMA OF WILDEST WEST

3-MILE GALA, GOLDEN STREET PARADE 10 A. M.

One day ticket admits to all.
Children under 10, 25c.
Fence maintained by electricity at night.
The performance daily, 8 and 8:30 p. m. Show open 1 and 2 p. m.

Operatic Concert by Prof. Jewell's Band of 45 soloists 30 minutes preceeding each performance.

also lighted allowing the animals to be seen as well at night as in the afternoon. This was a decided improvement and was frequently remarked about in the local papers and after notices.

The show returned to Ohio at Ravenna on June 17 for a two week tour. The following day in East Liverpool there was difficulty in setting up the show on a bad lot and the parade was cancelled. The march was also lost the next day in Ulrichsville following poor railroad service resulting in the show not arriving until noon. The matinee was also lost here. The afternoon show was somewhat compensated for by a turn away at night. The show played Columbus on June 22 and went as far south as Middletown on the 27, then headed north.

The local paper in Findlay, played on June 30, ran an extensive after notice the next day. It read as follows, "Findlay Has Treat In Genuine Circus. The weatherman assisted and the day eventually developed into an ideal setting for an old fashioned circus brought up to date. Two big performances and two concerts in the main tent and all the side shows played to practically capacity audiences.

"The name of Hagenbeck has always stood for well trained animals, well kept. The name Wallace stands for a high standard in circus life; the combination as it visited Findlay yesterday was all that was anticipated. There is a well fed, well kept, prosperous air about the show that finds expressions in clean uniforms, artistic combinations of color, original ideas and carried out by intelligent performers, good music and up-to-date minute entertainments.

"Shows like the Hagenbeck-Wallace combination have their problems for the audiences. The trained geese were so interesting, but the absorption in the kangaroo that staged a boxing event, and a clown making up in front of the section and some other clowns and a leopard that was riding an elephant, and Chinese jugglers, and the ice cream cone man, and the usher with some late comers, prevented them being seen.

"The antics of the clowns alone were good for one entire afternoon of fun. The general impression after leaving the big entertainment is that of having been gone from home for a month, and having witnessed all the sights and sounds that have been registered in a moving picture show during the time.

"Every act given was deserving of applause yesterday, but the audience was so intent on missing nothing that often appreciation due did not bring even the slightest response from the audience. Such an array of entertainment divides the interest and is at times bewildering. But it was a great day. A parade at noon was one of the best of the kind seen in the city in years."

Moving from Bowling Green on Sunday July 2 into Detroit for a two day stand the tents were up early but in mid-afternoon a bad wind and hail storm struck the lot ruining one of the draft stock tops. A newspaper article appearing the next day reported, "Ten persons were injured when a tent on the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus was blown down

by a storm which struck Detroit early yesterday afternoon. Seeking shelter, about 40 persons ran under the canvas. They had no more than escaped the rain when the wind whipped out the tent stakes and allowed the canvas to fall. The next day one of the longest parade routes of the season was covered tiring both human and animal participants."

The route book commented on the month of June as follows, "The first half of this month found the same troubles of May still with us. The unprecedented rains continued and the scarcity of labor was still interfering with the movement of the show. June brought us many days of big receipts, sufficient to make us deplore unfavorable weather conditions all the more. In spite of late arrivals, washed out highways, flooded show lots, wrecks and every trouble conceivable, the receipts for the month were surprisingly good. Sixty cars [actually 59], moving in three sections, can carry a great show, the result in this instance being so satisfactory to the management in the making of an enviable reputation and earnings of large receipts, that it was decided that this show will never exceed sixty cars. With its seating capacity actually increased 40% over any previous season, with its equipment coming out of winter quarters in better condition than ever before, with its new electric light plant and several other labor-saving devices, this moving city of seven hundred people and three hundred and fifty horses leaped into public favor more than during any previous season. Already plans are being made for the coming season of 1917, and the determination of the management not to permit the misfortunes of the fore part of the season to discourage them in any way was manifested daily.

"Pennsylvania has long been a favorite with this show, but now we must add the state of Ohio, for the old Buckeye State has apparently adopted the Carl Hagenbeck Circus as its own. Every day we were accorded cordial welcome and liberal patronage, the



This 1915 photo shows the clown band of the Hagenbeck show. Left to right are, Arthur Borella, Fred Egner, Kid Kennard, Karl Milvo, Archie Royer, Fred Jenks

(bandleader), Harvey Johnson, Lon Moore, Billie Hart, Ernest Girard and Dan McAvoy. All but McAvoy appeared with the show in 1916.

town of Uhrichsville being the banner stand of the state."

The clowns were a strong feature of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1916. The country was well aware of the war in Europe and typical of the mood of the country the clowns staged a "Preparedness" number burlesquing every phase of the national movement. The characters mimicked were William Jennings Bryan by Arthur Borella, President Wilson by Harvey Johnson, Pancho Villa [the Mexican revolutionary] by Ernest White and some ten others in various character and pantomimes as "the Spirit of '76," Captain Boy Scouts, General Nuisance, and "Getting Mexico's Goat." At this time the United States was having border problems with Mexico. There were thirty-six names in the clown roster a number of which will be known to later followers of the circus; Arthur Borella, Ernest White, Junior Lowande, George Baker, Art Monette, Billy Hart, Abe Aronson, Billy Langer, Kid Ken-

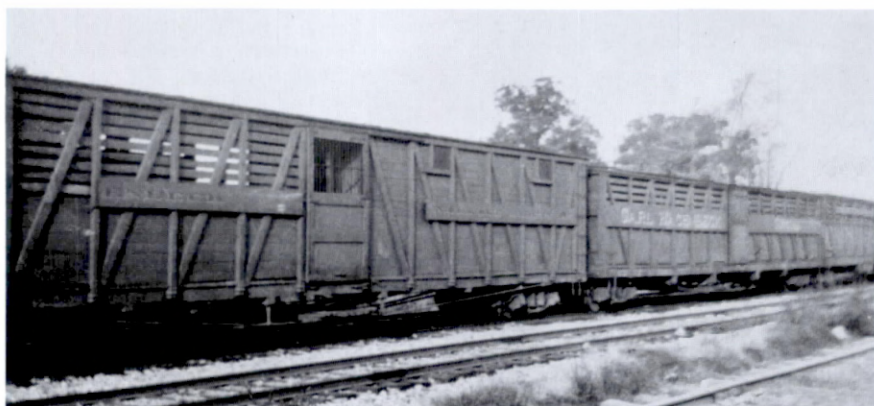
nard, Billy Rice, Charlie Bell and Louis Plamondon. There were twenty-one walk-arounds listed in the *Billboard* plus others.

A few of these were: "One Man Baseball," "German Band," "One Man Prize Fight," "Animated Camera," "Original Old Lady," "Dog Catcher," and "Funny Old Bill Poster." Humor certainly was a big part of this show.

The Hillsdale lot was on a fairgrounds where they had two big houses in spite of opposition from a Methodists camp meeting, a not unusual experience in that part of the midwest. At the start of the harvest time in the farm belt, many of the men left to work in the fields so that the show was almost constantly short of labor. However, since it was now summer and school was out much of the

The fifty-nine car 1916 Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus was truly a large circus. There are ten tents in the air. It is shown here on the June 6 lot in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. P. M. McClintock collection.





lost laboring men could be replaced by school boys who were anxious to work for a ticket to the show.

The show concluded its three week tour of Michigan in Hillsdale on July 21 and moved into Indiana at Auburn. The route book told of the month of July as follows, "This month as usual brought the show fine business, although we were in far different territory than last season at this time. The Fourth of July at Detroit was our first test of the enlarged capacity of our big top. We are satisfied we can fill a six-pole top, and every season we are filling our capacity more frequently. The entire new set of seats provided for this season have proved a money maker for the show.

"Pontiac was almost as good as Detroit in fact, the smaller towns repeated the experience of this show as giving us uniformly good business. Michigan was the chosen field for the operation of many shows this season, and all of them did well. Of course Holland maintained its past reputation, and that is all that can be said for that stand. The Indiana stands were exceedingly satisfactory, considering the heat. The heat this season was so unusual and so oppressive that it crippled the business of all shows seriously, proving even more disastrous than rain, to

The elephant and horse cars were lettered with the shows title. Ralph Miller photo.

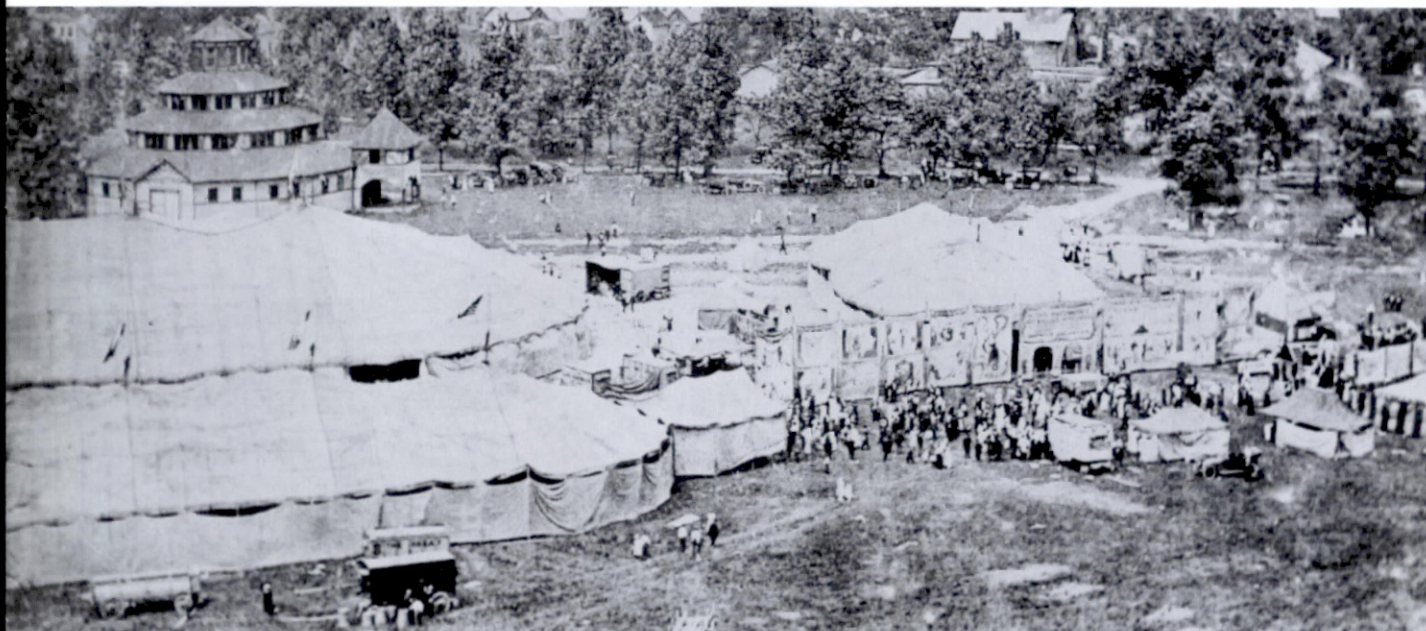
the biggest as well as to the smallest outfit. On account of the long spell of heat, Mr. Cory laid the show off at Greensburg, Indiana, so as to give all employees and animals an opportunity to recuperate and to start the ensuing week which started at Indianapolis, with renewed vigor. Being a Hoosier institution under both the old and new management, visitors were numerous in every stand in Indiana. All circuses have this season endured about fifty-seven varieties of unusual trouble, the larger shows surviving nicely, but the test was entirely too much for the smaller concerns."

August opened with the last Indiana town, Crawfordsville, after which the show moved into Illinois for two weeks starting at Danville. A number of small communities in Illinois were played, such as Pontiac, Roodhouse, Monticello, Litchfield and Galesburg. The music for the parade and the performance was under the direction of "Professor" Fred Jewell who had an outstanding reputation among outdoor show band leaders. He also was a composer of note and today his music is still played by bands of all

kinds. Under his baton were twenty-six musicians. The band played as two units in the parade, played a concert before each show in the big top center ring and also in smaller groups for the wild west after show, and of course played for the main performance.

The show moved into Iowa at Fort Madison on August 19 and played Burlington on Monday the 21st. Manager Charles E. Cory left the show in Burlington for health reasons. The Indianapolis *Star* broke the news on Sunday August 20 that Cory had sold his interest in the Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus to Ed Ballard on August 19. The article read as follows, "It was announced here [Lafayette, Indiana] today that a deal was practically completed whereby Charles E. Cory will sell his interest in the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus to Ed Ballard of West Baden. For some time negotiations have been carried on and it is said that the sale of Mr. Cory's stock in the shows will be consummated early next week. This was admitted by Mrs. Cory, wife of the general manager of the circus. The health of Cory has been impaired for several months and he is retiring from the circus business for this reason. Cory is a nephew of Ben Wallace of Peru, the founder of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, and has held an official position with the circus for twenty-three years. The show is also part owned by Crawford Fairbanks of Terre Haute." The *Billboard* endeavored to confirm and amplify the newspaper story by wiring Ballard, but he replied that he had nothing to say for publication. Fairbanks refused to affirm or deny and R. M. Harvey disclaims all knowledge of the transaction.

When Cory left the show in Burlington he advised that he was proceeding to Philadelphia to enter the University of Pennsylvania Hospital preparatory to undergoing a surgical operation for the removal of his gall bladder and duct. In a follow up story a Peru, Indiana paper advised that Cory had undergone a serious operation in that city





Louise Powell, of the Cottrell-Powell Riding Troupe, posed in the back yard during the 1916 season.

sometime earlier and that he had not been in good health since, being compelled to travel all the time and solve many intricate problems that had been a great strain on him in his weakened condition. The paper went on to say that for some weeks the circus had had great trouble getting workmen to handle the equipment. Hundreds of its laborers quit on account of the high wages offered in various industries and in many towns the management had trouble getting enough men to put up and take down the tents.

The operation was successful, but Cory remained at his home in Lafayette, Indiana, for the balance of the season to recuperate and to adjust some important non-circus business affairs.

It was reported in St. Louis that Cory was out for good and that R. M. Harvey, general agent, was to succeed him, but this appointment could not be confirmed by the paper. It was stated that Harvey had been signed for the 1917 season, but as general agent, not as manager. Following Cory's departure Ballard spent more time on the show and it is thought that Harvey probably was serving as the day to day manager, the 1917 program listed him as the show's business manager.

The show's performance, presented in three rings and two stages, was a strong one, perhaps the best that Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus had presented up to that time. Unlike many of the other large shows this circus never presented a "spec" as such. After the opening walk around, listed in the printed program as "A Gorgeous Military Tournament" the performance proper started.

2. Brengk's statue acts took over the stages and two end rings in posing acts, two in bronze and two in white plastic. This was a colorful and interesting act.

3. The center ring steel arena had Emil Schwyer presenting ten polar bears with many new stunts and with thrills galore. In the end rings in smaller arenas Captain Dutch Ricardo worked six tigers and Walter Eldred worked six Alaskan wolves and two hyenas. The two smaller steel arenas were struck as soon as the two acts were over,

these acts lasting only half as long as the center ring polar bear exhibit.

Between this presentation and the next the clowns took over for one of their many numbers in the show.

4. An aerial number that filled the upper reaches of the big top with eleven acts. Over the hippodrome tract were; Willie Ward, cloud swing; Miss Marguerite, aerial rings; the Melvos, revolving ladder; Len Keeler, swinging perch. Over the end rings and stages were: Two Alvares, balancing trapeze; Ward and Slater, a double trapeze act of exceptional merit; Edna Brock, novelty act and Mamie Ward, high cloud swing.

5. This was a big animal number. In the center ring arena Mrs. Ricardo presented an elephant riding tiger. In the other rings and on stages were young elephants worked by Emma Donovan, Prof. Treats' sea lions, Gordon and his boxing kangaroos, and large elephants worked by Miss Perrine, all good examples of animal training. It is interesting that there was no elephant act as such in the show.

6. Mrs. Ricardo worked Alice, the lion equestrian, in the center ring arena. In the end rings were Oscar Lowande performing a number of difficult bareback stunts and Dallie Julian performing in a way that kept her in the front rank of equestriennes.

7. Mrs. Ricardo was back again in the center arena, this time working the large Bengal tiger, Prince. Other acts in this number were the Cevennes in an iron jaw presentation; the Gillis Trio in head to head balancing with a remarkable catch by the lady; the Balot Trio in balancing on the rings and trapeze and Linderman in head and hand balancing.

8. In the center Emil Schwyer presented fourteen lions he had trained in one of the largest wild animal acts up to that time, a very sensational and thrilling presentation. This was surrounded by John White with dogs and ponies; Jean Ridiguez, one of the best tight wire artists then on tour; Miss

Ortez Romano on the tight wire and Miss Engener presenting trained geese, an outstanding novelty act.

9. Herr Von Ritter made an upside down head slide to much applause and a member of the of the Nanking Chinese Troupe slide down a wire suspended by his queue. The Great Darras, in a sensational slide as he maintained his balance on a trapeze bar on his head, as the trapeze slide from the peak of the tent to the ground. The clowns took over after this number.

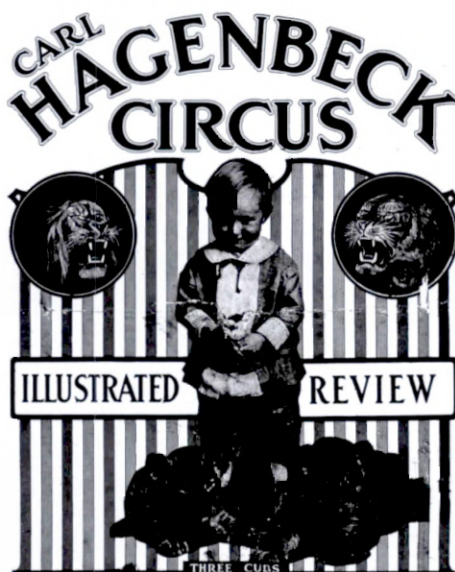
10. Miss Cottrell in the center ring [with wild animal arena removed] presented Queenie, a beautiful black horse, and a handsome black pony in one of the classiest acts in the entire performance. In ring 1 LeBelle Clarke had a horse, dog and doves in a pretty and entertaining act, while in ring 3 John White had a well trained horse and pony.

11. Ring 1 had Joe Lafleur a star of twenty-one years, working an aerial ladder act featuring a great fall at the end; over stage 1 the Mayori Troupe had a novelty trapeze act; ring 2 the strongmen act of the Dierick brothers, demonstrations of strength, concluding with them supporting a heavy trestle over which a loaded seven passenger automobile was driven; over stage 2 Lenzen Taylor had a table and chair balancing act and over ring 3 the Balots performed on aerial roman rings.

12. On the track high school horses danced and cavorted. Gladys Gorman on Magic, Dallie Julian on Black Beauty, John White on his high school mule while in ring 1 on well trained horses the Misses Catanach, Milvo and Jeffries, in the center ring and unusual posing act of elephant, zebra, horse and two dogs, and in ring 3 more high school horses ridden by Misses Brengk, Jenks and Partello. This whole number was rather unusual.

13. This was an outstanding number of

The cover of the 1916 courier featured a photo of Ballard's son Charles Edward "Chad" Ballard with two lion cubs. This copy was used to advertise the Sac City, Iowa, stand September 2.



SAC CITY, SATURDAY, SEPT. 2

wire acts with the wonder Raschetta in the center ring. In ring 1 the Lenzen Taylor Troupe, on stage 1 the Paschetto Troupe, on stage 2 the Cevene Troupe on a double wire and in ring 3 the Linderman-Nelson Troupe.

14. The Darras Brothers in a head balancing trapeze number over the center ring with the Dierick Brothers in a high perch pole act in ring 1, Marguerite and Hanley in a novelty perch act on stage 1, and the Freehand Brothers high perch in ring 3.

15. Now came clown acrobatic burlesques. Ramas and Arno, Reyer Brothers, Rice, Bell and Baldwin, Brock Brothers and Mardo Brothers in the rings and on the stages.

16. A six horse tallyho act by the nine Lowandes in the center ring was an excellent and unusual act. The Cottrell-Powell society circus act in ring 1 and Miss Cottrell and Miss Julian had a two horse carrying act in ring 3.

17. An acrobatic number with the Ten Eugenies, with some marvelous work by the youngest member of the troupe in the center ring. They were flanked by the Brother Davies, Del Ferio Troupe, Nanking Chinese Troupe and the Darras Brothers.

18. This was a comedy mule number which was very popular in circuses of this era. Ring 1 had a mule hurdle with S. Brock, stage 1 had a throwing mule worked by John White, stage 2 also had an unridable mule worked by Miss White and ring 3 had a mule hurdle act ridden by Karl Lauter.

19. The hit of the show came next, scored by the Six Flying Wards, doing the flying trapeze act that made them famous, introducing a number of difficult stunts. This was the only act in the complete performance that worked alone.

20. The show ended with hippodrome races, seven in number, closing with three

The cover of the 1916 route book was printed in blue. The same design was used on books issued the previous three years.



A group of tableau and cage wagons are pictured in the back yard of the show in 1916. Ralph Miller photo.

two horse Roman standing teams and two four horse Roman chariots, each making three trips around the track.

The after show or concert, was a wild west performance given by fifteen riders, cowboys, cowgirls and Indians for an additional fee of fifteen cents. Among those appearing in the after show was Ken Maynard, later to be well known as a cowboy movie star.

The 1916 edition of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus was by any standard a mighty organization as fifty-nine cars is a big show by any measure. The Buffalo Bill-Pawnee Bill Wild West traveled on fifty-nine cars in 1910 and 1911, but that was the only show, other than the Ringling and Barnum shows, to equal the giant 1916 Hagenbeck circus during the first two decades of the century.

A review of the performances of the Ringling, Barnum and Hagenbeck circuses in 1916 provide an interesting comparison. The two larger shows presented elaborate spectacles, using large numbers of extensively costumed people and great numbers of animals. A proscenium took the place of three or four sections of reserved seats on the front side of the big top, where the pageant was presented. The stories were presented in pantomime. Cinderella, presented by the Ringling show was given in six scenes, each of which was described in the program. The Barnum show featured Persia, the Pageants of One Thousand and One Nights, a massive presentation also requiring a large portion of the reserved section of the big top.

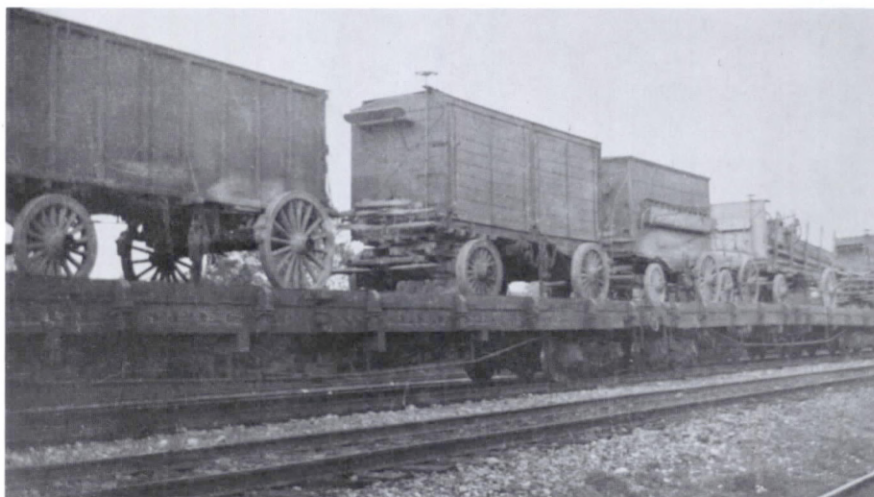
The Hagenbeck-Wallace show did not offer this type of theater. Instead it presented a number of fine wild animal presentations, which were not in either of the larger show's programs. In fact the Hagenbeck trained animals had built a reputation in the country that was unequalled. The Ringling show featured great names like the Nelsons, the Ernest Clarke Family, the Rooneys and the McCree-Davenport riders. Orrin Davenport, Charles Seigrist, Pallenberg's Bears, the Hannefords and the Siegrist-Silbon flyers were featured by the Barnum show. The

Hagenbeck offering included wild animal trainers Emil Schwyer and Dutch Ricardo, and the famous Six Flying Wards. The Ringling show had seventeen displays and the other two had twenty. All three shows had only one or two acts working alone as a center ring feature. There was plenty of circus in each of the three performances. From an entertaining, variety and thrill viewpoint all three shows were similar. The Hagenbeck show used a big top near in size to the others as all three shows used six pole big tops with three rings and two stages. The seating capacity was not too different.

The route book had this to say about the month of August. "Again we are reminded of fairs and chautauquas in almost every stand. The increasing number of free fairs does not seem to interfere with a reputable circus. Illinois and Iowa are two states that foster these classes of entertainment to the limit, and yet there are not to be found any better states for circuses. Our good friend 'Abner' Jones' [press agent], at Crawfordsville did the best he could for us, but the infantile paralysis scare was against him. We repeated Monticello, Illinois, this season, the home of our Treasurer, John R. Andrew, and although we arrived late and did not parade, his home town complimented him by giving the show fair business."

The week of August 28 was the second biggest of the season. At Spencer and Sac City the ticket windows had to be closed early before the afternoon show because of the crowds. It was announced that at this time a flat with three cages, and a stock car with horses had been returned to winter quarters, but no reason was given. This left 55 cars back with the show and still two ahead. It was also announced that Ed Ballard had placed R. M. Harvey in daily charge of the show. Word was released that the show had ordered fifteen elephants from Bombay, India, to be delivered in time for the 1917 season. However, so far as can be determined the elephants never arrived, so this appears to have been a publicity gambit.

As already mentioned the big top was a six pole tent 165 feet wide by 415 feet long. It was lighted by thirty-six electric arc lights giving excellent illumination to all the acts during the night show. The electricity was

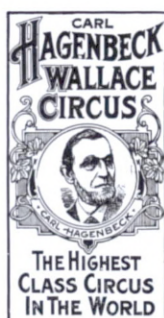


The last flat in this photo carried two pole wagons. Ralph Miller photo.

provided by two generators mounted on two heavy wagon. On top of the wagons were searchlights which were used to light the grounds during the teardown. The advanced lighting was also used on the midway and in the side show. In the menagerie besides electric lights on each center pole, all the cage interiors were illuminated so that all the animals could be seen as well at night as during the daytime. All of this new electric system was a vast improvement over the old gas and oil lamps of the past.

The menagerie was also a six poler, the same size as in 1915, an 85 foot round top with five 40 foot middles. The side show tent was an 80 foot round top with two forty foot middles. All three of these principal show tents were only slightly smaller than their counterparts on the Ringling and Barnum shows. For all practical purposes on the lot, to the average circus goer, the Hagenbeck-Wallace show would seem to be just as big as the two leaders. The other tents on the show were the dressing room tent, a 60 foot round with three 40 foot middles. There were two draft stock tops, each 30 by 150 feet. As in 1915 there were two dining tents, one for the performers, bosses and staff, and one for the workmen, each 40 by 100 feet. A kitchen top 30 by 50 feet served both.

The week starting September 11 had the



show in Mason City, Iowa. Two stands were played in Minnesota at Spring Valley and Austin. It is interesting to note that in Austin, a fairly large town with a daily newspaper, except for paid ads, the paper took no notice of the coming of the show. Returning to Iowa for seven more stands the

The cages were the only wagons that were lettered with the show's title during the 1916 season.



show played St. Joseph, Missouri, and then headed into Kansas at Hiawatha. The local newspaper in Hiawatha reported all seats for the afternoon performance were sold before 2 P.M. and hundreds sat on the track. The evening show was likewise heavily patronized, and it was estimated that between 12 and 15,000 people saw the two shows. Considering the size of the town, with a population of less than 4,000, this was a mammoth turnout. But then in those days before the widespread availability of movies and other entertainment most people in the rural areas were hungry for traveling amusements, the circus in particular.

One of the ways that circuses pulled such large crowds in small towns like those mentioned was the use of special excursion trains operated by the railroad serving the area. The special trains would run round trips from areas twenty to twenty-five miles away from the show town. The circus would cooperate with the railroad by printing special excu-

Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus

\$.....1916
To the Treasurer:.....
Pay to.....or order
.....DOLLARS, (\$.....)
being the amount agreed upon by the.....and the agent of the above named Circus;
for the privilege of Exhibiting a Trained Animal Show, Circus, Menagerie, Side Shows and Concert Exhibitions and
conducting Refreshment Stands on the show grounds for one day at.....
on or about.....1916. Permission is also given for the usual advertising in advance
including posting bills, taking banners, distributing and lithographing. It is agreed that there shall not be any claim
for damages to the streets and thoroughfares of this City on account of the Show Wagons passing over the same, and
should there not be any performance given within the city limits, there shall not be any license exacted.
A license is hereby granted for the above upon payment of the amount of this Check.
.....Agent
The Representative will call at your office and pay License by 10 a. m. on day of exhibition

This contract was used by the show in 1916 for bill posting space.

sion heralds listing the time the train would stop in each outlying community. The show would distribute the heralds in all the towns along the route. In the days before the wide use of autos, and good roads, when horse and wagon was still the principal means of transportation in these rural areas, the special excursion trains would bring several thousand show patrons from the small towns in the area that would not otherwise be able to attend the show. Most circuses employed an excursion agent to arrange for these trains and the sale of show tickets on them or through the station masters. On the Hagenbeck-Wallace show L. H. Heckman filled this job.

On September 25 the Kansas tour was continued at Fort Scott, followed by Joplin, Missouri, and then back for a final Kansas stand at Parsons. By September 30 the show was in Vinita, Oklahoma. The route book's comments on the month of September read as follows: "We have had our share of misfortune this season, the same as other similar institutions. However, one of the most peculiar circumstances interfered with us in Mason City, Iowa. Just prior to the time for the 'squadron' to leave, one of the heaviest of Rock Island engines derailed in such a manner as to completely block the yards, and



The back yard was filled with boxes used to carry props. Note the light construction of the wagons in background. Ralph Miller photo.

although we were using the Chicago Great Western tracks, we were blocked and were held there all night, losing the stand of Spring Valley, Minnesota, where the Commercial Club had enthusiastically paved the way for our coming. Souix City Labor Day proved a good choice. Had the threatened national railroad strike occurred, Mr. Ballard had arranged for the encampment of the aggregation there with a liberality that would have astonished the people with the show. Business has been almost uniformly fine in August and September."

The staff of this show had many names that would become well known in the circus business over the years, as well as many who were then established. Beyond Ballard and Cory, R. M. Harvey was General Agent and did the railroad contracting. Floyd King, a future circus owner in his own right, was the Contracting Press Agent. Also on the advance were D. F. Lynch, General Contractor and Palmer Robinson, Special Agent. C. A. Pheeny and Al Hoffman handled the 24 hour chores, the latter with another thirty or so years ahead of him in the business. Sam B. Dill, another circus owner to be, was Auditor and side show manager Warren B. Irons was also the fixer. Bud Gorman served as Equestrian Director. Buggy Stumpf was the trainmaster, while William Oldknow was big top canvas boss. G. H. Williamson was the properties boss, and Jake Posey was in charge of the draft stock. James Davis was in charge of the cookhouse assisted by Mrs. James Davis and Victor Davis. Trainer Emil Schweyer was responsible for the caged animals and Joseph Robinson was elephant superintendent.

In early October the show remained in Oklahoma, playing the small town of Hugo on the 7th. It was not until many years later that Hugo became as well known as a circus winter quarters town as Baraboo, Bridgeport, Peru or Sarasota. The following day after a 144 mile Sunday run, the show was in Ft. Smith, Arkansas as it started its eastern swing towards home. With only two and one half weeks left the show played a couple of dates in Missouri, with a 112 mile run from Springfield to West Plains and another 106 miles the following day to Jonesboro, Arkansas. Observers seeing the Hagenbeck-

Wallace train pass noted the flats loaded with wagons that carried no title. The flats, stocks and passenger cars were lettered Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus.

On Monday October 16 the show played Memphis, and continued in Tennessee the rest of the week, except for one stand in Mississippi at Corinth. On October 23 the show was in Cairo, Illinois, followed by Harrisburg and Mt. Carmel in that state. A 69 mile home run was made into West Baden for the final stand of the season on October 26.

The final comments of the season appearing in the route book read as follows: "The season opened at Mitchell, Indiana, Saturday April 22, and closed at West Baden, Indiana, Thursday October 26. Length of season was 26 1/2 weeks. Fourteen states were traversed. Again we are favored by an exceptionally beautiful autumn, and it seemed the route could not have been better for this season of the year.

"With Texas full of the smaller shows and with increasing ravages of the boll weevil in the eastern portion of that state, this show took several stands in Oklahoma and remain-

The final parade of the 1916 season was given in the winter quarters city of West Baden on October 26. Joe Bradbury collection.



Many of the untitled baggage wagons were short and loaded four to a flat car. Ralph Miller photo.

ed away from Texas. Business justified this decision. We would have taken more of the state in the oil section, but the railroads refused to handle us. That is one disadvantage of being a 'big show,' requiring three trains.

"This is the season of the year when every one with the show begins to worry as to where the show will close and as to whether or not they will 'be with it' another season. If it were not for unusual anxiety manifested as to the closing stand we would not be surprised if the date would be announced later, but as it is, the anxiety is more or less amusing to the management. Then too, there is always a chance for the route to be changed at the last minute because of circumstances which make it necessary to change, and in that event some harm might have been done by the premature announcement of the closing stand. We can state that we close at West Baden on October 26." The route book was published and distributed to those on the show prior to the end of the season.

Thus closed one of the most outstanding of the thirty-one seasons the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus toured. It was never again as large.

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JAMES T. JOHNSON and the GREAT WESTERN CIRCUS

by Orin C. King

The names of Willie Sells, Lucky Bill Newton, James A. Patterson, Bud E. Anderson, are recognized by nearly all dedicated circus fans as owners and operators of shows closely associated with Kansas, but a man whose career spanned more years than the showmen just mentioned, and who probably played more dates in Kansas than any other entrepreneur, is nearly unknown to circus historians.

The forgotten man is James T. Johnson.

Where Johnson came from, and when, is unknown to me. I have heard references to Davenport, Iowa, in 1848, and to St. Marys Mission to the Indians, in Kansas, in 1859. The first verifiable date for Johnson is Wednesday, July 11, 1866, at Oskaloosa.

Kansas in 1866 was a raw, rough, proving ground, a place of severely limited creature comforts where every sunrise was a new challenge and every sunset a victory. It was also a place of narrow morality where showmen and devils were nearly indistinguishable. But Kansans were also a people starved for amusement and hungry for a respite from their unceasing struggle to exist.

Spaulding and Rogers had played Oskaloosa in May 1858, but the turmoil of the approaching war, felt first in Kansas, put an end to traveling shows until the arrival of Johnson & Co's Mammoth Circus, "Composed of James T. Johnson's Great Western Circus and Van Vleck's Mammoth Show."

Advertising in the *Oskaloosa Independent* claimed "Thirty Performers, Four Lady Equestriennes, Two Highly Popular Clowns." Mentioned by name were "Joseph Tinkham, The great double somersault turner," "James Smith, English clown and his infant Clown, the smallest and youngest equestrian in the world." Johnson presented his trained horses, Snow Storm and Frank. A fancy Highland dance was performed by Mlle. Anna Cramer and Master Orade Van Vleck. Top billing went to Mr. and Mrs. De Casto who presented "the most wonderful feat entitled the Aerial Suspension or Sleeping in the Air, the most astonishing feat ever performed and it has been pronounced by those who have witnessed the performance as being something of a super-human nature, both beautiful and pleasing." Filling up the cracks and chinks was "one of the finest Minstrel Bands."

Price of admission was not included in the Oskaloosa advertisement, but at other towns it was listed as "Admission, 75 cents; children, 50 cents."

Following show day the *Independent* made a comment typical of the times:

"The Circus has come and gone. Like all such institutions it did no one any good. So far as business management and dealing with the press is concerned the managers act the gentleman. Of the merits of the show we know

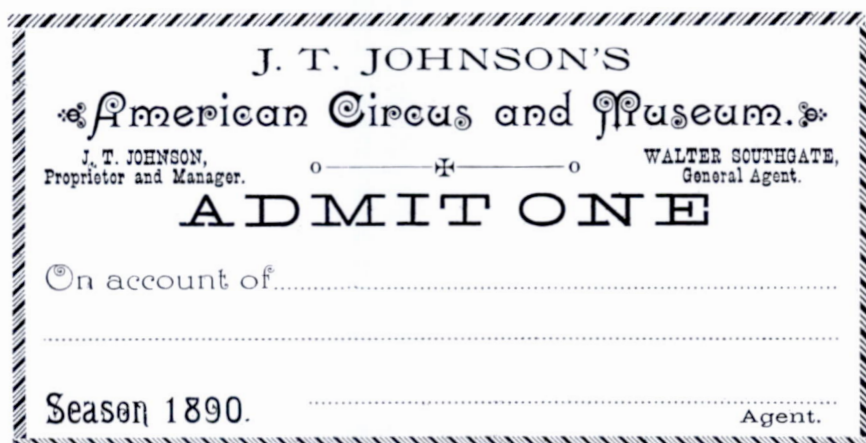
nothing, and care as little. We think the tendency of such exhibitions is bad, and hence never patronize them. If any one has ever discovered any good in them, he ought to patent the discovery as a rare curiosity."

Principles, however, did not prevent the editor from publishing a paid advertisement.

In the advertisement for the Topeka exhibitions of Friday, July 13, the show claimed "One Immense Pavillion Capable of holding 4,000 People." In all the years that Johnson played Kansas under canvas only three times were figures given for attendance. One audience was estimated at 500. The other two citations were each reported as 300.

have not been discovered. Following 1870 Johnson disappeared from the Kansas press until the season of 1881.

The earliest known Kansas date for 1881 is Monday, June 13, at Independence. For an unknown reason the date was blown. William Jerome had charge of the advance. Quite possibly Johnson had wintered in southern Kansas, for a story in the *Chetopa Advance* relates that the show "having completed their final arrangements for the coming season of 1881, have decided to open in Chetopa, on Wednesday, June 15th, afternoon and evening." The following day, June 16, the show as at Columbus.



This agent's pass from the James T. Johnson Circus dates from 1890. Pfening Archives.

Listed as staff in 1866 were James T. Johnson, Business Manager; J. Tinkam, Equestrian Manager; Van Vleck, Treasurer; and George Cramer, Master of the Ring.

The Great Western Circus over the years was the first show ever seen in many Kansas towns, and in 1866, on August 8 and 9, presented Junction City with its first circus. The only comment describing the equipment appeared in the *Junction City Union*. "It presented a very dilapidated appearance, and altogether was a very dilapidated concern."

The first circus ever to play Columbus, Kansas, was James T. Johnson & Co's United Circus and Performing Animals, Thursday, July 21, 1870. C. W. Kidder headed the advance. The only performers mentioned other than Johnson and his "trained and imported Thoroughbred Horses, Ponies and Mules," were "Mlle. Blanch Leopold, The Champion Lady Gymnast of the World in conjunction with G. Leopold, the champion of England." Advertising made no mention of any partners.

Columbus in all probability was not the only Kansas town played in 1870, but others

Johnson was apparently in one of his rare prosperous phases—if we can believe his advertising—for advertised were "New waterproof Canvas, electric lights and a new magnificent golden band chariot drawn by ten beautiful horses, elegantly bedecked with gay trappings." Johnson never mounted much of a parade and in 1881 he presented the bandwagon with Prof Charles Pezold's Silver Cornet Band and a clown cart which featured a team of dogs.

Admission had fallen to 50 cents for adults and half price for children. Johnson claimed "a full detective force to protect our patrons." Mentioned in the newspaper ads were Fire King, the leaping horse, Blue Rocket, another equine performer, and Snow Storm the wonderful trick horse. At Chetopa Johnson offered to buy eight to ten good teams on show day.

Johnson could have been lying about the new canvas, the new bandwagon, and especially the electric light, but the newspaper ads—two columns, illustrated, in genuine circus style—attest to his prosperity for such ads for Johnson were extremely rare. Another indication of money in the wagon was his offer to buy eight to ten good teams.

For an unspecified date in July the *Burlington Patriot* reported that, "The Johnson

circus bagged \$700 in cash in our city, and they did not spend \$100 here. This goes to prove that the average American will attend a circus whether there is anything in it or not."

By the time the show played Holton, Wednesday, August 3, Prof. Pezold and his Silver Cornet Band had been replaced by Prof. Charles Graves and his Silver Cornet Band. Personnel changes in later years on the Johnson show are linked to poor business and failure to meet the payroll, and this could account for the change in musicians, but there is no proof of financial troubles in 1881, and too little is known of the season to justify any conclusions.

The whereabouts of Johnson during the season of 1882 is unknown to me, but from references in the news the Great Western Circus and Trained Wild Animal Show spent the winter of 1882-3 at some undiscovered country town in southern Kansas. Opening day for 1883 is also unknown, but Johnson did appear in Cherryvale, Friday, May 11, followed by 17 other Kansas towns.

The performance for 1883 featured Mrs. James T Johnson working her trick horses, Sir Henry, Blue Rocket, Spot and Beauty. Mlle. Edith exhibited "graceful and dashing feats of Horsemanship." Miss Carrie Deanberry and two little girls (probably the Johnson sisters) appeared on the "Ladder of Life." Marco and Reno, gymnasts, performed "feats most wonderful, hanging by the toes, with heads enveloped in sacks, drops, straight leaps, pirouettes, and daring double ankle-leap."

Johnson's youngest daughter, billed as La Petite Mollie, presented January, the smallest trick pony in the world. Mollie was seven years old in some advertisements, eight in others. Mlle. Edith was probably Mrs. Johnson, for excepting the Johnson girls and clown Lee Powell, she was the only performer known to have appeared with the Great Western for more than one season.

By the time the show reached Eskridge, Saturday, May 26, the impossible feats of Marco and Reno were being done by Covallo and Courtney. Signor Eldora, the Great European Juggler, had joined the troupe by the Eskridge date with an exhibition of plate spinning and juggling knives and fire brands.

Billy Walton, the people's favorite clown, with comic songs and side splitting jokes, was advertised for Wamego, Tuesday, May 29. Walton was advertised for Waterville, Monday, June 18, but at Hanover the following day, Billy O'Neil "who laughs forty times in forty minutes" was the featured clown. Also advertised for Waterville and following dates was J. J. Sheriden, "The Lone Fisherman and Pantomime Clown." Music was provided by Prof. Schottle and his Celebrated University Band.

Miss Ella Johnson, the showman's eldest daughter, age 11, appeared at Waterville on the "Flying Rings" and remained on the bill for several years.

The season of 1883 must have begun with money in the wagon for in every town Lew Cole, advance agent, placed display ads in the local paper, usually one column, but sometimes two.

Johnson was no stranger to the newspaper

men in the towns he played and many of them found him above reproach. The editor of the Yates Center News reported that "Mr. Johnson certainly seems a gentleman, pays his bills as he goes, has an orderly, well-mannered troupe, and we trust to hear some day that he has reached the clearing at the other side of the woods."

The editor also thought that girls under the age of 20 should not go out with boys, but that is another story.

Johnson's season of 1883 was noted for one thing—gambling. Reporters in Cherryvale, Chanute, Humboldt and Silver Lake had much to say about it. The Topeka Mail, June 7, devoted nearly a full column to the story of its special correspondent in Silver Lake covering the exhibitions of Friday, June 1. The correspondent reported four different games.

COMING! COMING!

JAS. T. JOHNSON & CO.'S
GREAT WESTERN CIRCUS,
—AND—
Museum of Living Wonders.



Will Exhibit at DOWNS

Wednesday, June 17th.

AFTERNOON AND EVENING.

La Petite Ella will give a free outside performance upon a single wire from the ground to the top of the center pole at 1:30 and 7:30.

POPULAR PRICES,

T. B. Sadler, Business Manager.

Usually Johnson relied upon one-liners in the news columns and seldom used anything as lavish as this. From the *Downs* (Kansas) Times, June 4, 1885. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

"First was exhibited the 'what is it,' composed of a lot of knives stuck up on a box, then a lot of iron rings, and a manager whose business was to keep a sharp look-out for the 'lucky man,' six rings for twenty-five cents. Then the lucky man would pitch the rings among the knives and be the 'legitimate owner of all his rings encircled.'"

"Second, was an innocent wheel of fortune, where you bought a paddle or paddles with numbers on and the wheel went round and round, till at last it stopped, and the pointer indicated a number on the big innocent wheel, and as it corresponded with the number on your paddle, the holder paddled away with the pot, or else kept on till 'busted.'"

"Third. This innocent institution is commonly called a chuck-a-luck.

"Fourth. 'Hoss Races.' Rarus, Luna, and a number of trotting celebrities, in picture, pasted on triangular portions of a circle, over which three metal arrows with pin through centre, the turning of which one stops, at a time, and points to the 'lucre' piled or bet on a favorite steed. This was the 'Baden Baden,' and all you had to do was put down your money, the manager generally took it up. So it was real easy playing hoss race."

In conclusion the *Mail* hoped that "there will be from this time forever an end of our authorities licensing a lot of gamblers to operate boldly and all day long a series of low gambling games." Like most newspapers of the day the *Mail* failed to see the connection between the showman and the gambler.

The editor of the *Waterville Telegraph* warned his readers to be on their guard against confidence men and swindlers when Johnson played the town on Monday, June 18, but, after the show had come and gone, there were no reports of gambling. The *Telegraph* reported that "the proprietor was evidently on losing ground, having seen hard service in the recent storms and heavy rains. About three hundred people were present in the afternoon and perhaps half that number at night. It did not amount to very much at either performance, but we think the concert was the best part of the whole affair."

By the middle of November Johnson had come to rest for the winter in Neosho Falls. Johnson proposed to finance the winter by producing variety shows in Neosho Falls and surrounding hamlets featuring circus acts and now and then a drama. The Parlor Circus and Comedy Company opened in a rented hall Tuesday, November 20. The performance featured Johnson's daughters Mollie and Ella, and their trained pony, January, 33 years old. Comedy was supplied by Mr. Wheeler, of whom nothing more is known. The music was good. The prizes distributed to the audience created great excitement and some were "quite valuable."

Johnson's main occupation in Neosho Falls during the winter of 1883-4 was the organization of a new show bearing the title of Martell & Co.'s Great Consolidated Two-Ring Shows. The show, according to the Council Grove *Cosmos*, was owned by Harry Martell and W. H. Bluhdorn of New York. Johnson was hired as manager.

For the opening date, Saturday, April 26, 1884, a full-page ad appeared in the Neosho Falls *Post*. The name in the largest type was Clarence Robinson, a hurdle rider of better than average talent. The Martell Family presented acrobatics and their specialty bicycle riding. The Johnson family did a roller skating turn, riding, and a wire act. Pete Conklin was the featured clown. Also on the bill were the Holmes Brothers, double-trap; Mollie

and Ella Johnson with their trick ponies, January and Lillie; Harney and Harrison, snake charmers; Miss Ella Johnson on the Spanish rings; and the wonderful Man-Fish, Alfred Ray, whose skin was covered with scales. Miss Carrie Kent was apparently the busiest performer on the show. As a free act she slid down a wire from the top of the tent to the ground hanging by her hair. According to the ad Miss Kent was the only lady living who could perform the feat. Inside the tent she dived from the dome to a net over the ring and then did a turn on the tight-rope. Sam Lent had charge of the advance. Fifty cents for adults, 25 for children under ten.

The *Allen County Courant*, Iola, warned the world that "Jas. T. Johnson, who is connected with a Neosho Falls circus called Martell's is a first class dead beat. Papers making contracts had better look a 'leedle oud.' "

The show played its first road date at Colony, Monday, April 28, in a heavy rain storm. The *Colony Free Press* reported that, "Of all the snide shows that every struck a community, Martell's Grand Consolidated Two-Ring Shows is the worst we ever saw. It is a grand consolidation of the worst dead-beats, swindlers, thieves and libertines that could be got together."

The *Free Press* had kind words for the Martell bicycle act, but in conclusion hoped that it would be a long time before Colony is "disgraced by another outfit like Martell's."

The last town played in Kansas was Burlington, Friday, April 25. The show was billed all the way through Wednesday, May 8, at Parkerville, but all of the dates were blown. Something happened at Burlington that is not explained in the press. The Council Grove paper, the *Kansas Cosmos*, claimed the sheriff of Coffey County had seized the show but no confirmation can be found. Early in May Johnson was back in Neosho Falls, fitting out a new show in which he claimed he would be the only partner.

The last reference to Martell and Company in Kansas appeared in the *Le Roy Reporter*, May 10, when it reported that, "Two boxcars passing east over the Missouri Pacific the other day, contained all there was left of the wonderful combination." Kansas was blown, but it was not the end of Martell and Co., which re-opened May 26, in Troy, New York, and played an extensive season in the northeast.

Johnson had hoped to have his new show on the road by the first of June, but this proved impossible, and it was not until Saturday, June 28, that the show opened in Neosho Falls. In the meantime a young crocodile, eight feet long, from the River Nile, was added to the menagerie. On the 6th of June Johnson advertised in the *Neosho Falls Post* for two young women, "One with long hair for the Museum; and one to learn two acts for the ring." Also wanted were "candy stands inside and outside; and reserved seats for rent."

After the Great Western left Neosho Falls the *Post* reported that, "Several of our merchants were so well pleased with Johnson's show that they followed it to Yates Center." Johnson was never one to throw cash around when credit would do, and it is more than like-

ly that the merchants followed the show to collect money owed to them.

Advance publicity for Yates Center featured the only living crocodile from the River Nile, Prince DeFelmont, clown, and a free act starring Johnson's daughters. Yates Center was advised to not fail to see the "great free ascension, which will positively take place, regardless of the weather, every afternoon and evening, by the little midgets, the Johnson sisters." The *Yates Center News* reported good business afternoon and evening. The reporter thought that, "The little girls Ella and Mollie, are a show within themselves and one appearance is worth the price of admission." Admission to the main show was 25 cents and 15 for the museum.



Pete Conklin, a well known 19th century clown, was a feature on Johnson's 1884 offering, called Martell and Co. Shown here with Conklin is the rider Lottie Aymar. Pfening Archives.

Johnson had apparently learned a lesson in the previous season and for 1884 and all subsequent seasons, permitted no "bums, gamblers and dead beats," as the *News* put it, to hang around his show and the editor thought that "if there can be such a thing as a moral circus Jim Johnson has it."

By the time the Great Western played Augusta, Saturday, July 19, an after-show had been added—"the world-renowned New Orleans Minstrels."

At Sterling for the exhibitions of Tuesday, July 29, a new boast was used concerning the free act of Ella Johnson. The *Sterling Bulletin*, with a fine disregard for the truth, ran Johnson's handout proclaiming that "Little Ella, the child wonder, only nine years old, who has walked across Niagra Falls on a single wire will walk a single wire from the ground to the top of the center pole. This is free to all."

Attendance for the first month's operation was generally described as small. The clown,

Prince DeFelmont, did not last out the month of July, and by the 24th was superseded by the "funniest of them all, the well-known Lee Powell."

The *Central Kansas Democrat*, speaking of the exhibitions at Lyons, Wednesday, July 30, stated that, "Of all the snide entertainments that ever struck this community, we think the Great Western circus is fairly entitled to the pastry."

Wednesday, August 6, found the show in Salina, and the day after the *Saline County Journal* commented that, "The Great Western Circus rolled into town yesterday in all its grandeur. The procession consisted of all the delivery wagons in town, headed by a brassy

band. The crowd was large but did not attend the circus."

Lee Powell, "the funniest of them all," by the middle of September had been replaced by Dell Knowlton, "the popular clown."

The Great Western came to rest October 16 in Scranton, Kansas, ending the season of 1884 with an evening only exhibition, and settled down for the winter.

Scranton at the time had no newspaper and all we know of Johnson's activities was gleaned from scant mention in the papers of nearby Osage City and Burlingame. During the winter Johnson operated a skating rink in Scranton which apparently was well patronized.

On May 18, 1885, the Great Western departed Scranton to open the season in an unknown town. Johnson promised to return to Scranton about November 1, but the *Burlingame* paper carried a comment from their Scranton correspondent that, "Johnson with his circus outfit has gone and for our moral benefit it is hoped that he will not return." There is no indication of what Johnson may have done to earn this censure, but he had a record of leaving a trail of unpaid debts behind him, or perhaps the citizens found him guilty of some religious *fau pas*, for Scranton was in

the very heart of the Bible Belt. In any event Johnson never returned.

The first known date of 1885 is Wednesday, May 20, at Alma. The *Alma Enterprise* disposed of the show with the comments that, "The circus has come and gone. Like all wagon shows it was very thin. The circus did not take any great wealth out of the town. It was patronized according to its size."

Competition crowded Johnson in several towns. Col. Giles' Great World's Fair, which had opened its season as Pullman, Mack Co., played St. Marys six days behind the Great Western. More annoying competition came from Hunter's Consolidated Shows. Hunter played Downs, Tuesday, June 16, and Johnson exhibited the following day. Hunter played Kirwin sometime during the week of June 14, and Johnson made the town on Saturday, June 27. Hunter billed Gaylord for Wednesday, June 17, and Johnson appeared Tuesday, June 23.

The Great Western Circus profited by comparison with Hunter's Consolidated which was nothing more than a thinly disguised front for the worst kind of gambling and swindling. Johnson advertised his show as being free from the undesirables, and press comments everywhere confirmed his claim. Even so, T. B. Sadler, in charge of the advance, had his hands full in combating the Hunter thieves.

The small town was Johnson's target and his show appeared in places like Leonardville, population "over 400," and Wayne which had "nearly 200 inhabitants." At Leonardville Johnson called at the G. A. R. post and gave passes to all the old soldiers present.

At every town the press commented on the thinness of the performance. Some papers called the performers outstanding, but more of the newsmen condemned the quality of the exhibition, but they all lauded Johnson for the absence of fakirs.

The *Osborne County Farmer*, Osborne, claimed the show to be the "biggest fraud ever perpetrated on a long suffering community. The menagerie consisted of two cages of animals, one containing the ticket agent and the other two coyotes, a rabbit and a monkey. In the ring the only features were bar performances, tumbling, juggling and pantomime foolishness by two clowns. The only commendable features were the absence of gamblers and thieves and a fair band of music."

The *New York Clipper*, June 27, 1885, reported that, "James T. Johnson has sold his interest in the Great Western Circus and will put a new outfit on the road. He wants several performers."

The first indication of a change was in the use of two column display ads in the newspaper, beginning June 11, in the *Gaylord Herald*. Johnson's name still headed the ad and La Petite Ella was still featured in her free act.

The first mention of the new owner appeared in the *Kansas Pioneer*, July 2, in a review of the exhibitions of Thursday, June 25, at Smith Centre.

"Johnson's, or rather Foster's, show was here Thursday last. As a show it is not large, but has some good performers, and their

band, led by Prof. Ben Becker, is really a splendid band. There is one thing we can say of this show outfit that cannot be said often of these shows, and that is, they are a first rate, jolly set of boys, and no gambling allowed on their ground. We think that is praise enough for one show."

The show continued to operate under the Johnson name through stands at Kirwin, Phillipsburg, and lastly, Long Island, July 1. At Kirwin, Saturday, June 27, the show refused to pay the \$25 license fee and set up on a lot at the edge of town for which they paid \$10. The show asked for and received permission from a deputy sheriff to circulate their bandwagon through the city streets. The mayor of Kirwin put an almost immediate stop to the music, because the show had not paid the license fee. A former mayor angrily confronted the city officials and offered to drive the bandwagon himself. Sensibly, the circus avoided a showdown and retreated to the lot where the band continued to play.

Coming—All Hail to the Chief—Coming!

James T. Johnson & Co.'s GREAT WESTERN CIRCUS!

—AND—
MUSEUM of LIVING WONDERS.

The most complete and excellent of all tented exhibitions, replete with unique marvels, and gigantic sensations.



25 Star Performers; Dens of Wild Beasts; Drovers of Trained Ponies; Intelligent Fine Horses; Troupes of Leapers, Acrobats, Contortionists, Gymnasts and Riders.
Free Exhibition every day at 1 and 7 p. m., when La Petite ELLA will make an ascension on a single wire, from the ground to top of the Center Pole.

DON'T FORGET DATES: Cedarville, Monday, June 22d, Gaylord, Tuesday, June 23d, Barian, Wednesday, June 24th, Smith Centre, Thursday, June 25th.

Popular Prices of Admission

After the show was acquired by Col. Foster, the ads became larger and more frequent, but Johnson's name continued to be used until July 1, 1885, after which the title was changed to Col. Foster's New York Circus. From Gaylord, Kansas *Herald*, June 11, 1885. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

Col. Foster and Johnson went their separate ways after July 1, with the show now billed as Col. Foster's New York Circus.

Johnson's new show was organized in Glen Elder, a few miles west of Beloit, with a new partner, Charles Simpson, bare-back rider. Simpson moved into Kansas circus history as mysteriously as Col. Foster, with nothing known of either one.

The new show was quick in its birth and opened in Glen Elder, Saturday, July 25, under the title of Johnson, Simpson & Company's Consolidated Circus and Menagerie. The *Beloit Western Democrat* announced, July 24, that "Glen Elder is to have a circus

Saturday. They know it is a good one, for it is a home made concern." Glen Elder had no paper.

The first reports on the merits of the new show concerned Saturday, August 15, at Logan. The local newspaper reported that, "While there has been many better exhibitions, there has been at the same time many worse. It is but justice to say that it was one of the most orderly and quiet circuses that we ever saw. Everyone of the company seemed disposed to do their best to entertain the patrons. One of the contortionists was very good. Mr. and Mrs. Cutts are very fair trapeze performers. The little Johnson girls were very cute and will in time make fine performers."

T. B. Sadler handled the advance. No formal newspaper advertisements were used, but Sadler relied upon a handout which appeared in nearly every town and for a Johnson show was quite lengthy. The story utilized by Sadler named most of the performers.

First mention was given to Charles Simpson, "the Master of Horse par excellence, with his wonderful imported trained Trakene stallions." Madame Editha, Mrs. Johnson, was declared the champion female bare-back equestrienne. Other performers mentioned were the Nelsons, trapeze; Charles Morison, contortionist; Sig. Leon, hurdle and trick rider; Sam Bennett, leaper; Johnson Sisters, double ladder; Ella Johnson, Spanish rings; Lee Powell, Billy Cutts and John Armes, clowns; Edna (Mollie?) Johnson, trained ponies, goats and monkeys; Prof. Harvey Mackey, dogs; Nellie Cutts, juggler and slack wire; Frank Showers, the human Salamander; and Prof. John McKinstrey's reed and cornet band.

In the museum were Madame Devere, the Kentucky Bearded Woman; Sylvia Zobriskie, the Circassian Lady; the wild men of Borneo; Signor Bartino, Fire Eater, sword swallower and magician; and the talking machine, calliope, dens of wild animals and cages of rare birds.

La Petite Ella, formerly 11 years old, but now nine, twice a day walked a wire from the ground to the top of the center pole while the band played a Promenade Concert. It was all outside and free.

The first circus ever to play Ness City was that of Johnson, Simpson & Co., Friday, August 28. The *Ness City Times* gave the show a mixed review.

"While the museum of living curiosities was conspicuously absent (unless the bearded woman be considered a museum), and while an ordinary mule constituted the entire circus, still the show was worth going to see, and about 500 persons attended the afternoon, and about 300 the evening performance. The girl walked the wire rope, the clown and the ring master, the tumblers, and the greatest contortionist of the country were there. To be sure it was not as great as it might have been, but Ness City has had her first circus."

Toward the end of the evening performance the wind came up and most of the audience left for home. Some of the audience was still present when the wind snapped the center

pole and the canvas crashed down. Only one person was injured—one of the show girls—but not seriously.

The show arrived at the next town, Jetmore, in the afternoon, but two exhibitions were still given. No horses were used in the performance and the actors were severely hampered by the lowness of the canvas. Some unfortunate citizens were held on jury duty until midnight and missed the show.

Additional names appeared in Sadler's handout late in August. New to the list were Henri Gonzales and son, Mexican double riders and tumblers; Jack Nelson, Charlie Lamont and Alf Doran, clowns; Huldah Zomarra, snake charmer; and Henrietta Reed, three-headed songstress.

The last date I have for Johnson, Simpson & Co's. Consolidated Shows is Kiowa, Wednesday, September 9.

Whatever became of Charles Simpson is unknown, but in the middle of October Johnson was in Medicine Lodge promoting the construction of an amphitheatre for winter performances of his circus.

Early in November construction was under way. The building was 75 feet in diameter, well heated, with dressing rooms, circus ring, horse stalls and a few private boxes for those who could afford them. A stage was included and Johnson promised to vary performances with popular dramas. Advertising listed Johnson as proprietor and George Louproil as business manager. Admission was 35 cents, 50 cents for reserved seats, and 25 cents for children. Programs were promised for every evening except Sunday. Before construction was completed, high winds blew down the building, but the result was merely to delay the opening.

The amphitheatre opened Saturday, December 5, 1885, with an attendance of nearly 600. Featured in the first program were the Louproils, double trapeze; Ella Johnson on swing rings; Gilmore and Brewster, Negro minstrels; Master Jerome, barrels; Prof. Nichols, slack wire; Mlle. Corinne, vocalist; Baby Lulu, child artist; Ella and Mollie Johnson, ladder; and Prof. Wagner's brass band and orchestra.

Near the end of December, business manager Louproil was replaced by Lon West, an actor. Johnson had tried to present a varied program, but his resources were too limited and the community too small to support a continuing amusement. By January the amphitheatre was on a downhill glide. Lon West left with a Tom show. The newspapers refused ads after February 19. On the 24th of February a benefit was given for Johnson, and in April another was given for his daughter Ella for reasons unstated. Johnson turned his attentions to the Great Western Circus and the season of 1886—a season that would have made Beelzebub cry.

Late in March Johnson purchased for his menagerie a wild cat captured by the McKeever boys who lived up on Cedar Creek. The brothers delivered the cat in an incredible manner—hog-tied. Some rainy day when things are dull, try to hog-tie a wild cat.

Another animal—a cougar—belonging to Ed Buck of Lake City, was hired by Johnson, along with its master, and received top billing

in newspaper advertisements for the first six weeks of the season. "The Monster Lion 'Nero,' will be led through the streets in the procession," was announced in the publicity for every town until the middle of June, but there was never a mention of cougar, or mountain lion, and the public was free to imagine a monster African lion loose in the village streets.

Another acquisition for 1886 was a new crocodile, also eight feet long, and, of course, from the River Nile. It is never, in circus handouts, the Nile River; always the River Nile. One never hears of the River Ohio, the River Missouri, or the River Mississippi. In any event, the Kansas public would not have known a crocodile from the River Nile from an alligator from the River Caloosahatchee in Florida.

AN ILLUSTRATED

HISTORY OF ANIMALS,

CONTAINED IN THE

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY,

WITH

Great Western Circus, Aviary and Aquarium of Living Wonders, for the Season 1884.

WITH

Accurate Colored Illustrations and Descriptions,
Carefully Compiled from the Best Authorities and Specially Designed for the Instruction and Entertainment of the Young.

NOT THE BIGGEST, BUT ONE OF THE BEST WAGON SHOWS ON EARTH.

ADMITTANCE to all parts of the Great Selected MUSEUM of } 15 Cents.
WONDERS only, }
CIRCUS only, } 25 Cents.

PRICES RULE THE DAY.

JAS. T. JOHNSON, Manager.

New York:
NEW YORK POPULAR PUBLISHING CO.,
252 Mercer Street.

While this title page from an animal booklet published in 1884 implied that the Johnson show carried any number of exotic animals, such was not the case, which must have dismayed many children a century ago. Pfening Archives.

The season of 1886 opened in the amphitheatre in Medicine Lodge, Saturday, May 15. The first road date was Pratt, Monday, May 17. The Medicine Lodge *Cresset* reported that, "The Great Western Circus and Museum of Living Wonders got out of town last Sunday, after a lively day with creditors, attachments, etc. In fact the nearer it come the time for Col. Johnson to leave, the stronger was the attachment some of our citizens had for him. But the Col. is gone and we must say that we hope he will succeed this summer on the road, as any man who has the gall, nerve or whatever you call it, to tackle anything and who will rustle like Johnson, ought to succeed."

The other paper in Medicine Lodge, the *Barber County Index*, reported that Johnson had acquired an unnamed backer for the Great Western and concluded its report with a comment that has the absolute ring of truth, "No more permanent investment can be imagined."

After the show had left Medicine Lodge, the *Index* ran the following:

"Look Out for Him.

"The Great Western Aggregation of Mammoth Wonders, the Pavillion of Magnificent Thoroughbred Curiosities, the World-Renowned, Fortune Eclipsing Circus and Menagerie, under the sole management of that prince of wind-bags, &c., &c., Jas T. Johnson, pulled out of this city last Sunday, and the city heaved a sigh of relief which it had not been able to do for the past six months. He threatens to come back here next winter. We hope he will change his mind, for of all the 'beats' that ever infested a community, Johnson was the worst. He made promises only to break them; he paid for nothing that he could get on credit, and his word was entirely worthless. During a part of his stay here he gave a fair performance, but most of the time it was tame and uninteresting, and he was an injury to the town. The INDEX is not a heavy loser by Johnson, but it takes this method of warning the craft not to trust him under any circumstances. He will beat you in some way as sure as you do. His record before coming here was an index to the character he acted out while here."

J.M. Connely was business manager and the advance was directed by Harry Moore. The name of the show's "angel" is never divulged, but the sheriff of Barber County, C.D. Nelson, must be included on the list of possibilities because of a letter used by Moore in nearly all of the early dates.

"Medicine Lodge, Kas., May 6

"To Whom it may Concern:

"The bearer of this letter, Mr. Harry Moore, is advertising the Great Western Circus of Mr. James T. Johnson, which is a responsible show and gives general satisfaction. Mr. Johnson has been with the people of this town for some seven months, and I can say that we all regret the departure of the whole company. Mr. Harry Moore is a gentleman, and can be relied on as such.

"C.D. Nelson

"Sheriff Barber Co. Kas.

"Wm. Lindsey, Under Sheriff."

Johnson played Jetmore, population 150 and two newspapers, Wednesday, June 16, and at daybreak on Thursday began his trek to Pawnee Valley, about ten miles north of Jetmore. The following account is from the *Jetmore Reveille*, June 23:

"We have all been praying for rain. It came Thursday with a vengeance—accompanied by hail as large as a pullet's egg.

"The circus company had just left town and when about one mile out, received the full force of the hurricane. The horses tortured into madness by the cutting, bruising hail, became simply unmanageable, and dashed hither and thither in their wild fury, overturning wagons and contents and spreading wreck and ruin all around. Not seeing the wire fences the poor brutes rushed on them and added new torture to that which they already suffered. Many were rendered helpless, and many are totally ruined. Nor did the men suffer any the less. Losing their hats in the general wreck, the hail pelted their pates to a jelly and bid fair to kill them entirely. Forgetful of themselves they did all they could to save the horses. Two of

their number were compelled to take to their beds and receive a doctor's care, while all adjourned to town to mend up as best they could."

For two days, Thursday and Friday, the Great Western remained in Jetmore, resting the men and horses and repairing the extensive damage to the equipment. An effort was made to reach Ness City, billed for Saturday, June 19, but rain and high water kept the show on the muddy roads until Monday, June 21, when they arrived in Ness City at noon—a distance of 25 miles.

The tents were erected immediately and a performance announced for two o'clock. About 100 people attended and the show had just commenced when a storm came up and severe winds flattened the tent in about five minutes. There were no injuries, but it rained hard for three hours. The tents were re-erected and a crowd of 300 attended the evening exhibition.

The disasters of the day and those immediately preceeding ate up the gate receipts, and the show was stranded in Ness City until Wednesday of the following week. According to the Ness City *Times*, Johnson turned the show over to two men, Barber and Conley, who reorganized the venture. Exhibitions were given at Ness City, Saturday, June 26.

Ed Buck and the lion "Nero" deserted Johnson at Ness City, and, apparently, the band also left the show, for at Walnut City (present day Rush Center), Thursday, July 1, Johnson tried to hire local musicians.

The Walnut City *Herald* reported Johnson's first day back on the road.

"Mr. Johnson, manager of the Great Western Circus, met with quite a painful accident while en route from Ness City to this place on last Wednesday afternoon by being thrown from his buggy under the heels of his horses and sustaining serious injury by being kicked several times."

At least, his luck was consistent.

On Monday, July 5, Johnson played Ellinwood and the show was attached by employees and held in Ellinwood for an entire week. Harry Moore of the advance was one who thought he should be paid for his efforts. It is not known what arrangement was made between Moore and Johnson, but on the payment of \$12 to another employee, the show was permitted to move on.

Chase, which had been billed for Tuesday, July 6, was played on Wednesday, July 14. The Great Western arrived in Lyons on Thursday, July 15, but no exhibition was given. Beginning Friday, July 16, through Saturday, July 24, at Lyons, Johnson played evenings only.

It was becoming more and more difficult to move the show every day. Ellsworth had the show for two days, Monday and Tuesday, August 2 and 3, and another two-day stand was played at Abilene, Friday and Saturday, August 13 and 14.

The Abilene *Gazette* reported that, "The three Melville Bros. and Mr. Leaham, who left the Great Western circus in this city, for the reason that they had been performing for the last four months with no prospect of seeing any ducats, gave a clever street performance last evening along side of the *Gazette* band

stand, the band donating them the music, which attracted a large crowd.

"The boys were flat broke, and will work their way back east by giving street shows at towns along the line of road."

Johnson staggered on down the road to exhibit at Downs, Tuesday, August 31, and remained until September 5. J.H. Reynolds, who was on the show in an unknown capacity, returned to his home in Lyons with a report that the show was stranded at Downs and had "turned their men out with not a cent to go home on."

The Downs *Chief*, September 3, gave a different slant to the stay in Downs.

"At the Rink Tonight.

"A benefit will be given by the citizens of Downs to little Ella Johnson, who is a member of the Great Western Circus, and is lying ill in our town, the show being detained here on that account. A first-class entertainment will be given, strictly moral in every respect. Let everybody go and lend a helping hand. Admittance for children 10 cents, Adults 25 cents."

HISTORY OF ANIMALS.



THE ZEBRA. (*Equus zebra*.)

The Zebra is perhaps the handsomest and most elegantly clothed of all quadrupeds. He has the shape and build of the horse, the outline of the stag, and a striped robe of black and white alternately disposed, with so much gleam and symmetry, that it seems as if nature had made use of the rainbow to paint it. These alternate tints of black and white are so much the more singular as they are straight, parallel, and very exactly divided, like good stuff, as they extend themselves, not only over the body, but over the head, thighs, legs, and even the lower tail, so that at a distance, this animal appears as if he were surrounded with little flames, which some persons had supposed in a regular manner over every part of the body. In the female these bands are alternately black and blue. In the male they are brown and yellow, but always of a lively and brilliant nature, upon a short, fine, and soft hair, the texture of which increases the beauty of the robe. It is in general less than the horse and larger than a cow, although it has often been compared to these two animals, it is the neither of them. His disposition is ugly, fierce, and indomitable. His range is among the mountainous districts of Abyssinia, which he prefers to the arid plains of Abyssinia and Central Africa.

Prof. Barry, the celebrated horse-tamer, encountered more trouble in his efforts to subdue one of the Zebras of the British Museum than all the wild horses on the Continent. Like a Hottentot male, it will kick violently with all four of its feet, and leap to some all-attitude of rejection. The specimen connected with this exhibition is remarkable: fine and well proportioned.

BOA CONSTRUCTOR. (*Boides*.)

Two extensive collections, exhibited in this great show, are greater both in size and number than has ever before been exhibited together under one roof. The thrilling spectacle of a human being entering the den of the Python and exiting their death grapple, has almost like some fairy, out of their own ark of daring, to be seen only under one management. These amazing acts, a length of thirty feet, and an instance in an record of one man entering a snake of 100 feet in length, having been accomplished in the use of a single man, could a man who was lying asleep in a box. The victim of the *Boides* is destroyed by powerful compression, *Boides*, or the snake, rolling its body round it, or more gradually tightening the coils. In this manner the body of the animal is reduced to a state of being crushed, and this operation simply means man's destruction. One instance of the compression of a aquatic snake, in

Typical page from 1884 Johnson animal booklet. These illustrations and text were used on a number of circuses in the 1870s and 1880s with only the cover and title pages indicating the show. Pfening Archives.

On Sunday, September 5, the Great Western pulled out of Downs, bound for Red Cloud, Nebraska.

Johnson was back in Kansas for the Old Soldiers' Reunion at Burr Oak, Monday through Friday, September 13 through 17. Performances were scheduled for evenings only, but Johnson's luck held and Monday was lost to the rain. Two contortionists who were unable to collect their pay left the show at Burr Oak and performed on the streets of near-by Mankato to raise money for railroad fare.

Between June 17 and September 3,

Johnson had at least 13 blown dates, and if the entire route were known there would undoubtedly be more. During the season a total of at least 18 days were lost for reasons of weather or insolvency.

Johnson abandoned the circus business for 1887 and took the road with Johnson's Uncle Tom's Cabin Company. At the end of September, he was in Pratt promoting the construction of another amphitheatre, but this, too, failed, and in December Johnson was back on the road doing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Ten Nights in a Bar-room*.

The only date known for the entire season of 1888 is Saturday, July 14, when the Great Western Circus played Howard, Kansas, "to a small audience."

The New York *Clipper*, March 16, 1889, reported that Johnson's circus had left winter quarters in Monett, Missouri. "The citizens and newspapers of that town," to quote the *Clipper*, "do not speak in very complimentary terms of Mr. Johnson and lay sundry serious charges at his door."

Great expectations existed in southern Kansas in the early spring of 1889. More than 20,000 people were camped in the neighborhood of Arkansas City awaiting the opening of Oklahoma to settlers. Johnson appraised the situation in February and announced that he would return in March with the Great Western Circus. The local newspaper, the *Arkansas Valley Democrat*, thought this an excellent idea "as he owes us \$8.00 and just now it would come in handy."

Johnson opened the season in Arkansas City on Friday evening, April 6. General admission 15 cents. Reserved seats 25 cents. Children 10 cents.

The first run on Oklahoma occurred April 22, 1889, but the circus business in Arkansas City continued strong. In the middle of May, Johnson sold the show to W.R. Robinson, from Texas, but remained as manager. On June 27 the *Arkansas City Traveler* reported the sale of the show to a group of Wichita promoters, but Johnson still remained as manager.

Except for the 4th of July when the show played Geuda Springs, the entire summer was played in Arkansas City. Late in July the show closed temporarily because of the hot weather. The fate of the Wichita investors is unknown, but by the middle of September Johnson was again the owner, financed by Dr. Guden of Arkansas City. Plans to finish the season playing in the south were announced in September, but nothing is known beyond the announcement.

Business had been good in Arkansas City. There are reports of full houses and Johnson was believed to be prospering. Featured during the summer were Franklin, the fire eater, and Kelley, the riding clown. A lady mind-reader drew large crowds of women and the men patronized the boxing matches. Competition for the circus came from numerous bear-baitings, bull-baitings, dog fights and rooster battles.

Missing from the news is any mention of Mrs. Johnson and the daughters, Ella and Mollie.

The season of 1890 opened in Arkansas City, Saturday, May 10, but the press ignored

the event. The Great Western exhibited Tuesday, May 20, at Sedan. The review of the Sedan *Times-Journal* indicates a typical James T. Johnson production.

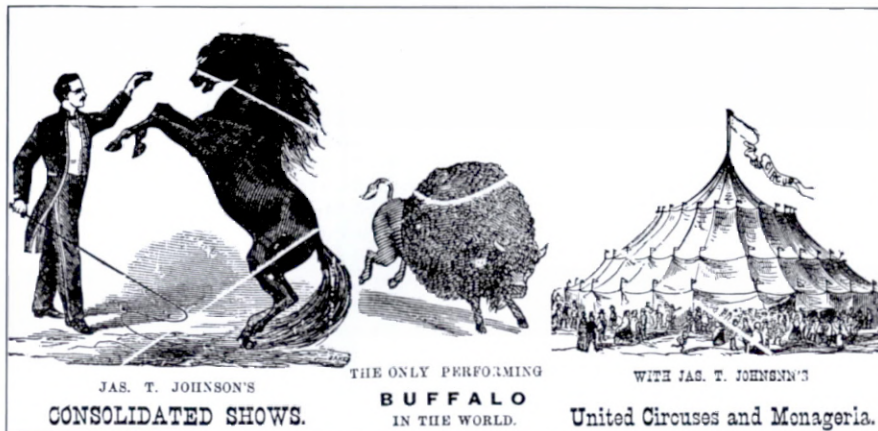
"Johnson's circus was here Tuesday. Except the balloon ascension and parachute act, the whole thing was a fraud and a failure. The performance under the canvas did not contain a single redeeming feature. The music was execrable and the tumbling mediocre and that's all there was of the show. The people of Sedan tumbled to the thing and nearly everybody saved his money."

For the performances of Wednesday, May 21, the Elk City *Enterprise* claimed "it was the same old story with several chapters left out."

The last mention of Johnson is a billing to play Mound City on Monday, June 2, 1890. Here the trail stops, but the career of James T. Johnson presents a fascinating image of Kansas in the last days of the vanishing frontier.

In the 1880's Kansas railroads were rapidly extending their trackage, particularly the Santa Fe, and new towns were springing up wherever promoters thought the rails would go. Dozens of towns were conceived of dreams, and many of them were never more substantial. Some that were platted—like Pawnee Valley and Nonchalanta—were quickly abandoned. Thousands of settlers were pouring into central and western Kansas and it was believed that a town every twenty to thirty miles was necessary to supply what the farmers needed.

One thing that the farmers needed was an



Envelope used by the James T. Johnson Circus, circa 1884. Pfening Archives.

escape from the grinding labor and the loneliness of the homestead, and it was here that James T. Johnson proved his social worth. Villages like Junction City, Columbus, Saratoga, Scott City, Dighton, Wayne, Ellis and many an unknown cross-roads were given their first view of the great world beyond the horizon by James T. Johnson and the Great Western Circus.

Whatever became of Johnson in his later years is unknown. Where did he die? How did death come to him? Where is he buried? What became of his wife and children? And did any of his efforts ever succeed? Who—other than

Job—had worse luck than James T. Johnson?

In closing I offer you something entirely different, which has nothing at all to do with James T. Johnson.

In my seven years of research I have read hundreds of show reviews, but the one that pleases me most concerned J.M. Barry's Great American Circus and appeared in the Scranton, Kansas, *Gazette*, May 5, 1893.

"The Great American Circus has come, done it, and gone."

My thanks to Bill McCarthy of the Circus World Museum, and Ted Bowman, for providing clues when I needed them. Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera Shops, Topeka, Kansas and the First National Bank of Topeka, Kansas.



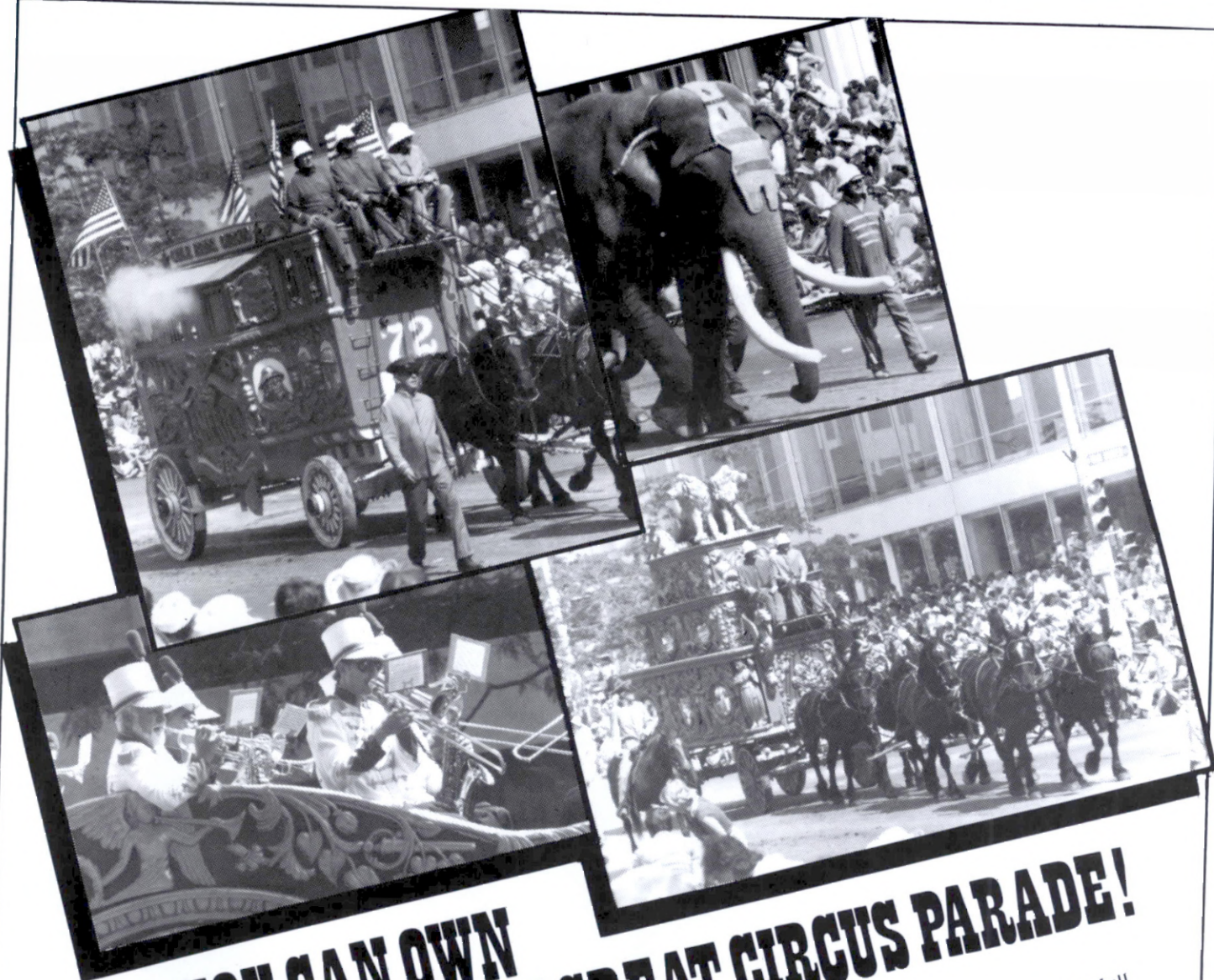
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Madame Louise Tourniaire and Her Family

by John Daniel Draper

Of all the prominent Tourniaire equestrians, undoubtedly the foremost was Madame Louise Tourniaire (1825-1901) who was really a member of the family by marriage only. The surname is quite often misspelled as Tournaire, which then changes to Turnaire, Tournine, Tournour and finally Turnour, the latter being the actual name of the famous clown, Jules, who was not of this family.

Madame was born Louise Ciseck or Zhieskick and, after being apprenticed to the family in Europe as a child rider at the age of 5, was later married to Francois Tourniaire. She had three brothers—Benoit, Theodore and Ferdinand Ciseck—pupils of Francois Tourniaire, all of whom were good riders who took the Tourniaire name. Her brother Benoit, who was known as Mons. Benoit or Benoist, should not be confused with her brother-in-law Benoit Tourniaire nor should Ferdinand Ciseck be confused with Ferdinand Tourniaire. Louise had two daughters, Josephine Tourniaire DeMott and the celebrated little Mollie Brown. The former of these was the mother of Josie DeMott (Mrs. Charles M. Robinson), Louise DeMott (Mrs. Robert D. Stickney, Jr.) and Willie DeMott, all famous riders. There were also five other children.

Jacques Tourniaire, the founder of this dynasty, was born on October 17, 1772 at Grenoble. At the age of 15 he went to Paris where he was engaged in the troupe of Astley and became one of its best riders. When Astley returned to England, Tourniaire continued working in France for some time with Antoine Franconi. In 1801 he began a tour of Europe which took him to Germany where he remained from 1801 until 1815. He and his wife, Philippina Rediger Tourniaire, were both very popular entertainers. She was born in Nancy in 1780 and was known for her sensational Amazon horse act. After 1815 Jacques remained in Russia for several years where he was the director of a circus which was claimed to be the first one ever seen in that vast region of the czars. He died on January 14, 1829, at Koenigsberg and was buried in the Catholic cemetery there.

Philippina (1780-1852) remarried, her second husband being a civil servant named Mayne. She had had six children by her first husband—Benoit, Francois, Ernest, Sophie (Madame Louis Fouraux), Louise and Adelaide (the Baroness Henry). By her second husband she had two more sons, Louis and Ferdinand, who assumed the name Tourniaire of their beau-pere and traveled with circuses in Russia. Louis created the celebrated pas de deux with a young mulatre and was the father of the famous jockey, Philippe Tourniaire, and of Fanny, who married Eugene Leonard Houcke, a son of the familiar equestrian family from Scandinavia.



Louise Tourniaire is considered one of the greatest female riders and horsewomen of all time. She is depicted in this European lithograph early in her career. Ringling Museum of the Circus.

Madame Louise Tourniaire was born about 1825 in Germany of a family of acrobats by the name of Ciseck. The girl was taken in charge of the Tourniaires and under their tutelage she first began to ride. In the early 1840's when she appeared in London standing erect while doing the principal act, she was highly acclaimed. The city went wild with admiration for her nerve, daring and grace. A few years later in 1846 the family embarked at Hull for America. This girl became the wife of Francois Tourniaire, then head of the family.

In a career that lasted until 1883, her work in the arena was to impart life, vigor and interest to the circus ring. At one time she was

considered the most intrepid female rider in the United States. She was one of the first women to stand on one foot on a cantering horse, balancing herself erect. Her elegant act upon a single bareback steed was truly marvelous. As a bareback rider, she was reputed by her grandson, Willie DeMott, to have jumped over a banner twelve feet wide. At one time she was the reigning belle of the Cirque Napoleon in Paris, being the first female to successfully ride in public the four horse act. Her great bareback act on six horses has seldom if ever been surpassed. She would bound from steed to steed in a reckless manner, reining and controlling with the most skillful ease her flying troupe during its utmost speed of flight in magnificent evolutions. She "looked like a leaping cataract horribly beautiful."

An ad for Ballard, Bailey & Co's French Circus at Concord, New Hampshire in 1855 stated: "The fixed eyes, anxious counte-



JAMES M. JUNE & CO.'S
AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN AMPHITHEATRE.
 THE distinguished features of this most magnificent concert of the celebrated
FRENCH TROUPE, from Franco's Paris, and Le Cirque National de Paris, Brussels, composed of 12 FEMALE and 12 MALE Performers who were engaged at an enormous expense by the senior Proprietor, who visited Europe during the past winter for the express purpose of obtaining the best talent which the numerous Companies of England and France could afford. Among the principal stars of this troupe are:
Mademoiselle Louise,
 The only Equestrienne who has ever appeared in America, who rides without saddle or bridle, **Mademoiselle Rosaline,**
 The Equestrienne Tumbler, distinguished by peculiar style.
Mademoiselle Tourniaire,
 Whose wonderful skill in the feats of the Manège has everywhere been the admiration of all. **Mlle. Josephine,** and **Mlle. Jeanette,** together with **MONSIEUR BENOIT,** the great Equestrian Necromancer, **MONSIEUR TOURNIAIRE,** &c., &c.
 The unrivalled Clown and Jester, **W. F. WALLETT** is attached to the company and will enliven the performances with his rich and witty jokes. The array of native talent which is embodied in this company is, beyond comparison, the greatest ever assembled in America, to prove which it is only necessary to mention the names of **S. P. STICKNEY,** the extraordinary Polyglot, **GEORGE SERGEANT,** the scenic and character Equestrian, **JAMES NIXON** and his talented children, &c., who form but a small part of this truly magnificent Troupe.
 The Band of Horses belonging to the company is the best and most thoroughly trained ever exhibited, first among which is the great performing Horse, **CINCINNATI,** acknowledged on all hands to be the finest animal in the world in beauty and action.
 The above Company will perform at SPRINGFIELD, on WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY JULY 3d and 4th.
 On Wednesday, July 3d, Doors open at 11:20 and 7:14 o'clock, P. M. Performance to commence at 2:12 and 7:34 o'clock. On Thursday, July 4th, Four Grand Performances will be given, commencing at 10 A. M., 2:14 and 8 o'clock, P. M.
 Doors open half an hour previous to each performance.
 ADMISSION, 25 cents. Children under 10 years of age, half-price.
 June 17. disw25

Mlle. Louise and Mlle. Tourniaire are one and the same in this 1850 newspaper ad. Louise is used in connection with the principal act and Mlle. Tourniaire in connection with the manege act. This was the first American circus on which she appeared. Pfening Archives.

nances and breathless suspense of thousands of her audiences in Paris, Rome, Vienna, London, New York and the larger cities of the Union, wherein this magic artist has performed, attest to the high reputation of this greatest lady equestrian in the known world. She never had an equal nor will she until the equestrian education of Mlle. Josephine, her favorite pupil, is complete, whose youthful grace and beauty, as well as talent, give strong promise of sharing the renown of her great preceptress."

Quite early, while still doing the great principal act, Madame Tourniaire also presented her fascinating and famous manege act for which her particular style established a new high standard.

Louise took very good care of her highly trained horses. Their sensitive mouths were kept clean and she stroked their coats with white silk handkerchiefs. If there was any dust on them, the groom immediately felt the wrath of her temper, which was terrible. Her snowy white riding gloves were almost spotless at the end of each performance.

Black Diamond, her favorite manege horse, performed a wondrous dance movement in which he simultaneously moved his right fore foot and left hind foot so as to meet under his body. Next, he changed to the other two legs, with a rocking motion, while standing in one spot as the band played "Ten Thousand Miles Away," the only tune to which he performed. This beautiful black horse with his rider, dressed in black wearing a sable cockade hat and a scarlet flower in the jacket lapel, had created a sensation in Europe. On the way to America the horse rubbed off a sizable portion of his tail and, on his first appearance in New York, wore an artificial one.

As the act progressed and the rocking motion continued, unknown to Louise, the false tail fell off and there was considerable laughter in the audience. Louise was enraged by what she considered to be an insult and she wanted to return to Europe immediately.

The Grand Act Manege of Madame Louise Tourniaire reached its zenith by 1876 on the Montgomery Queen Circus where she presented Rienzi, a coal black thoroughbred. This trick and dancing horse was best adapted to exhibit Madame's particular skill, grace and knowledge of an extensive range of equitation. Faultlessly seated in her side saddle, with tiny whip in hand, she compelled Rienzi to march, trot, gallop, waltz, dance, pirouette, balance and do high leaps and a number of other difficult moves, all evidence of complete and masterful control.

The first record of the Tourniaire family in America was in 1850 when Louise, husband Francois, daughter Josephine and brother Benoit and his wife, Rosaline Stickney, were on James June's American and European Amphitheatre. The other brothers, Theodore, rider and acrobat, and Ferdinand, rider, were also there that year. Mademoiselle Louise was billed as horse trainer and the only equestrienne appearing in America without saddle or bridle, coming from Franco in Paris and Le Cirque National in Brussels. The great W.F. Wallett was jester for the act. She also did manege riding as did Mlle. Josephine and Rosaline. Mons. Benoit was juggler and rider.

The following year the French Troupe, including Francois and Louise, continued on James M. June & Co., appearing among other places at the New York Amphitheatre at 37 Bowery. Francois starred in the "Courier to St. Petersburg" and Louise was advertised as the greatest female rider living. Also there were Josephine, Ferdinand and Theodore Tourniaire. Mons. and Mme. Benoit were on Rufus Welch's Circus, he as a two horse rider and Parisian juggler and she as a rider in the Andalusian entree. In addition, during the 1851 season, Madame Louise Tourniaire was credited with appearing for short periods on J. Nixon's Circus and R. Sands & Co.

At the end of April 1852, Mons. and Louise Tourniaire and Josephine and Madame Benoit closed at R. Sands & Co., having appeared with that show at the New York Amphitheatre since January 2. Later Francois was equestrian director for James M. June's French Circus and Madame Louise Tourniaire was the star equestrienne assisted by Mlle. Josephine in "Tours de Grace" on a single horse. Madame Louise was also advertised in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* as being on Welch's National Theater and Circus.

For the new year of 1853 Mons. and Madame Tourniaire as well as Josephine and Ferdinand were featured on R. Sands & Co. at the Bowery Amphitheatre. On June 15th of that year Col. Alvah Mann with Messrs. Moore and Thompson opened the Washington Circus, a canvas show, at the corner of 6th Avenue and 39th Street in New York City. It was still running in September when the new spectacle, Carnival of Venice, was being presented with a stud of horses and with Madame Tourniaire in her beautiful performance presented at each entertainment.

The Tourniaire family received top billing in this 1855 Ballard, Bailey & Co. newspaper ad. Pfening Archives.

ner of 6th Avenue and 39th Street in New York City. It was still running in September when the new spectacle, Carnival of Venice, was being presented with a stud of horses and with Madame Tourniaire in her beautiful performance presented at each entertainment.

In June 1854 Whitbeck's Circus at Wellsburg, Virginia featured the Parisian

Ballard, Bailey & Co.'s
FRENCH CIRCUS!



Comprising the very celebrated
TOURNIAIRE TROUPE,
 With all the Distinguished Artists who have appeared in this country during the last five years, and also those whose performances in Europe have secured to them a world-wide reputation,
Will Exhibit at Cornish,
 NEAR THE WINDSOR BRIDGE,
On Thursday, July 12.
TICKETS, 25 CENTS.
Doors open at 2 P. M. and 7 P. M. To commence at 2½ and 7½.
 It is impossible to no more than simply mention a few of the names of the various Artists connected with this magnificent

CIRCUS!
 There are do supernumeraries—all are brilliant stars—a host individually; and when combined, form a troupe never before equalled in the world. The Proprietors feel confident the public will appreciate their success in uniting as a Company so much acknowledged talent.

MADAME TOURNIAIRE.
 No lady, in ancient or modern time, has ever equalled this accomplished Artiste, in the courage, beauty and finish of her exhibitions. Among other performances, she will ride Six Horses bare-back, bounding from steed to steed, reigning and controlling her flying troupe, during their utmost speed, exhibiting

FEATS OF COURAGE & HORSEMANSHIP
 never attempted by any female in this country. The fixed eyes, anxious countenances and breathless suspense of the thousands of her audience, in Paris, Rome, Vienna, London, New York, and the larger cities of the Union, wherein this magic Artist has performed—attest the high reputation of the greatest Lady Equestrian in the known world; she has never had her equal, nor will she until the Equestrian Education of **Mlle. JOSEPHINE**, her favorite pupil, is completed, whose youthful grace and beauty, as well as talent, give strong promise of sharing the renown of her great preceptress; she will appear and confirm her growing reputation as a model rider.

MONS. BENOIT,
 The GREAT TRICK RIDER, will appear in his Gymnastic and Equestrian performances, startling and amusing his audience with his feats of Horsemanship, Light Balancing, on Horseback, Cup, Ball, Plate Spinning, Stick Dancing, &c. This celebrated Artist, known to every child in the United States, as receiving the royal patronage of the Sovereigns of England, France, Russia and Austria, has been secured by B. B. & Co., to add, if possible, to the various other attractions presented.

FERDINAND and THEODORE, in their astonishing and daring feats. Master Theodore is the greatest rider of his age in the world.

Mr. A. F. LYMING, the great Flying Cord Performer, will exhibit his skill in a variety of Aerial Gyration on the Corde Volante.

Mr. SAM. WELSER,
 The great Hippocentral Describtor, will appear as Clown. This simple announcement is sufficient, for who has not heard of Sam, the original Clown in this country? and among other grotesque fantasies, will introduce his "MAGIC HAT!"

The stupendous Parisian Feats called LA PERCHE, will be performed by Messrs. W. J. Smith & Rogers. Battoute Leaps and Tumbling by the Company, with a

GENERAL VARIETY OF ENTERTAINMENTS,
 The whole exhibiting one of the most amusing and instructive Entertainments ever witnessed in this country.



Josephine Tourniaire Demott, Louise's elder daughter, appears in this 1863 lithograph from the S.O. Wheeler Circus. Circus World Museum Collection.

Troupe led by Madame Louise Tourniaire and her highly trained dancing and manege horses, Columbus and Chemella. Francois was the equestrian director and Mlles. Josephine and Rosolthe (presumably Rosaline) were also in this company. Welch and Lent, for part of the 1854 season, also claimed Mme. Louise as manege rider.

The only information available for 1855 placed Louise on Ballard, Bailey & Co. She was horse trainer, rider and bareback performer. Starting in May of 1856 Ballard, Bailey & Co's French Circus, also reported as Madame Tourniaire's Great French Circus, proclaimed Louise as the great six horse bareback rider with Mlle. Josephine as her favorite pupil and a model rider. Also, Master Theodore, the hurdle leaper, was in a two horse act with his brother, Master Ferdinand, the best trick rider of his age. Mons. Benoist, the great equestrian gymnast, balanced lights while riding horseback as well as doing cup, ball and plate spinning and stick dancing. At some period in the same year Madame Louise appeared on Joe Pentland's Circus.

The last mention of Francois Tourniaire's appearing with Louise was in 1857 when they were on Sands, Nathans & Co. along with the juvenile riders, Theodore and Ferdinand. Madame did her bareback act with six horses. For part of that season she was also on L. B. Lent's New York Circus where she was horse trainer and rider of her dancing horses. Her brother, Mons. Benoit, was with George F. Bailey & Co.

The next year Madame Louise Tourniaire was horse trainer and rider on Tourniaire and

Whitby's Circus. Her daughter, Josephine, and her three brothers were also there. All were riders and Theodore also did acrobatics.

Sometime in the 1850's Francois and Louise had bought a farm in New Jersey which they used as a winter resting place. Their daughter, Josephine, had been a rider since 1850, having come to the circus from a convent school. She was very shy and would gladly have escaped from the circus back to the school. Even after she married the rider James DeMott in 1861, she appeared with him in the ring not because of her love for the circus, but because of their genuine love for each other they hated to be separated. Also at that time the travelling of non professional members of the family on the show was discouraged. In spite of this situation, Josephine was a good rider, although not great, and was credited with being one of the first to jump through the paper covered hoops called balloons. Madame Tourniaire had desired Josephine to professionally follow in her illustrious steps, but that was not to be.

At this point, a summary of James DeMott's early career might be in order. Born at Troy, New York in 1838, he was of French and German ancestry but neither parent had any circus connections. He ran away from home and joined S. B. Howes' U.S. Circus in 1848. He was apprenticed to William Smith, a four horse rider. The next year he was with John Platt Crain's Co. and in 1850 visited the West Indies under the management of Harry Whitby. James DeMott was on the following shows in the decade of the 1850's: Quick & Co's Menagerie (1851); Sands, Quick & Co's Circus & Menagerie (1852); Washington Circus in New York City (1853); L.G. Butler's North American Circus (1854); Mabie Bros. Circus (1857). He then joined George F. Bailey & Co. and afterwards, Lent & Sloat, with whom he made a trip to the West Indies. Before he was of age he had established a ring barn in Frankford, Pennsylvania where circus riders were trained and he was known as the "boy prodigy" circus rider.

Madame Tourniaire's second husband was William C. Brown, a circus musician. Around 1860 a daughter was born to this union, Mary (Maria or La Petite Louise Marie), popularly known in the circus ring as Miss Mollie Brown. This child was of the same temperament as her mother and became the exciting somersault rider whom her niece, Josie DeMott, always sought to emulate.

During the Civil War period members of the family were with L. B. Lent each year except 1861 and 1862. Mons. Benoit was there in 1860 and in the same year Josephine, Ferdinand and Theodore were with Chiarini. In 1861 Louise and Josephine were on G. F. Bailey & Co. as was James DeMott. This was the year of DeMott's marriage to Josephine. Louise was on L. B. Lent's Circus from November 1863 through 1865. In the latter year was the first appearance of her highly trained manege horse, May Fly, in The Games of the Curriculum. At the same time she was also billed as the only bareback equestrienne ever seen. She was the "Imperial Mistress of the Circle" and "Queen of

the Arena," riding without saddle or bridle. She also introduced a school of manege exercises with a superb troupe of five French dancing horses.

Madame Louise Brown's brother, Mons. Benoit, was in Cuba and Mexico in 1864. He was with the Gran Circo de Chiarini and later with Albisu's Circus and was on that circus when he died on September 13, 1865 in Havana. He was a great trick rider and juggler on horseback. His wife, Rosaline Stickney (1833-1857), had been a charming principal and manege equestrienne, tall, beautiful and majestic in her equestrianism. They were married in Havana in 1850, the year that she debuted on James M. June's Circus. In her brief career she was referred to as La Belle. She rode with grace and fearlessness, finished her act with leaps through balloons and over banners, and created a sensation as a daring hurdle rider. She was the eldest child of Samuel Peckhill Stickney and was the sister of Robert T. Stickney (1846-1928). Mons. Benoit and Rosaline were the parents of Rosaline (Crissy) Stickney, who was a famous four horse bareback rider for a number of years on John Robinson's Circus and Adam Forepaugh Circus between 1873 and 1889 and in South America until 1896. After retiring from riding, Crissy for some years presented trained animal acts.

Benoit's brothers, Theodore and Ferdinand, were equestrians of the first order and general performers of superior skill, and Ferdinand's wife, Kate Ormond, was a rider. Ferdinand and Kate appeared together as early as 1864 on Dan Rice's Great Show. She filed for divorce in 1869. Ferdinand, in 1870 on Hemmings, Cooper and Whitby's Show, was billed as the best pad rider in the profession.

The earliest reference to little Mollie Brown was as Marie on L. B. Lent's Equestriculum in 1865. She was there with her

Mollie Brown, Louise's younger child, was an extremely talented rider. Circus World Museum Collection.



mother who was still listed as Madame Tourniaire. Over the next decade Mollie rapidly developed into a very intrepid rider, being the first woman to turn somersaults on the bareback of a running horse in the ring. This feat afterwards became a feature in all of her performances. Much of her early practicing of this somersault act was done at the Franklin, New Jersey training barn of Eaton Stone where Louise Tourniaire also trained.

The Elmira, New York *Gazette* of July 2, 1873 editorialized on Mollie Brown's act with the O'Brien Circus: "Old and experienced circus riders consider it quite a feat to turn somersaults on a horse going at full speed but here is a young girl twelve years old, the only female who has the bravery and skill to accomplish it, performing the feat with an ease and grace that call forth the most enthusiastic applause."

With all of her ability and even after she had become one of the greatest riders of her day, there were instances when Mollie Brown would be called upon to show her determination and courage in adversity. On one occasion, during the final fanfare of the band, she slipped and fell from the back of her white resinback into the mud and shavings of the ring. Her mother, watching from the back door, ran to the side of the crumpled little figure who was sobbing woefully with a broken arm. Madame Tourniaire assured her that they must take care of the injury, but

first Mollie had to finish her act. And that is exactly what she did.

In 1878 there was a ten year old apprentice named Katie Brown who was travelling on O'Brien's Circus at the same time that Mollie and her parents were there. As the show came into Frankford, Pennsylvania the child equestrienne was taken from the train by the Society to Protect Children from Cruelty and returned to her mother, a Mrs. Coles. She was sent back to school because she came under a new law that prevented the training of children under 16 years of age for public performances. Undoubtedly she had been under the tutelage of Madame Louise Tourniaire Brown. This circumstance is interesting in light of the fact that Louise, herself, had been an apprentice at the age of 5. Also, this was the year of Mollie Brown's marriage clandestinely to Clarence Farrell, who was for many years treasurer of Frank A. Robbins' Shows. In about two years Madame Louise was to retire as manege and side saddle equestrienne on Batcheller & Doris' Circus.

Madame Louise Brown died at Philadelphia in April of 1901. After her retirement, she and her husband, who died two years before, had lived in Frankford, Pennsylvania. There she continued to be until the day of her death, always visited by performers from everywhere and known to all as the "mother of the profession."

Her daughter, Mollie Brown, considered by many in her day to be the world's greatest bareback rider, died in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on January 9, 1924. Her second husband was James J. Files, a non professional. Two daughters, Louise and Viola, survived their mother.

Meanwhile, James and Josephine Tourniaire DeMott pursued their own circus careers although their path would overlap that of Madame Louise on Campbell's Caravan & Circus in 1870 and on Sheldenberger's Circus in 1871. Josephine, who quite obviously did not live up professionally to her mother's expectations, had an equestrian career that extended from 1850 to the 1870's. She died in 1920 at the home of her daughter, Camille. Her husband, James DeMott, father of the DeMott Family, who began his circus riding with S. B. Howes at the age of ten, served on a number of the O'Brien shows, notably in 1869 to 1871, 1875 to 1876 and in 1882, quite often as a manager. He was also a circus proprietor in 1868 (DeMott and Ward) and in 1880 (Hilliard and DeMott). In a number of other years he was a manager—1878, 1879, and 1881. From 1884 until 1892, nearly until the time of his retirement, he was ringmaster with John Robinson's Circus. During his earlier riding career he had been variously billed as the leading bareback equestrian of the hemisphere (in 1867 on Adam Forepaugh after James Robinson had left) and as the winged Mercury (on DeMott and Ward's Circus & Menagerie in 1868). Highly respected and honored, he died at Frankford, Pennsylvania in 1902. It was to her father that Josie DeMott Robinson dedicated her 1925 book, *The Circus Lady*.

The eldest son of the DeMotts died in 1868 aged about five. Of a family of eight children,



Josie DeMott, Louise's granddaughter, continued the family's tradition of great female riders. Circus World Museum Collection.

three in particular became famous riders: Josie (circa 1868-1948), Louise (circa 1873-1946) and William (8/22/1869-1945).

Josie DeMott was reputed to be the second woman to do the backward somersault on the bareback of a moving horse and was also the first woman to perfect the shoulder stand from a horse circling the ring. Never more than five feet tall and weighing something less than one hundred pounds, she began her career of principal riding around the age of six in 1874.

In her interesting volume *The Circus Lady* she explained how she learned the difficult bareback somersaulting act. "On the ground I could turn them all day but here some strange sensation took hold of me as I stood on the horse's back that took all the desire to do the trick from me... I kept riding around, every now and then sitting down, as if I were trying something new, but before long it was evident to the onlookers that I was scared. My father called to ask me if I was frightened and I said, of course, I was not, but the horse was not galloping close enough and he acted as if he was going to shy, besides. As a matter of fact, I was feeling something I had never felt before, not only of growing shame at my plight, but real fear that clutched me all through. But my father was still looking at me. I jumped and I jumped, but alas not over. Finally my father stopped the horse and told me to try it while the horse stood still. Even then I could not."

Her father was now disgusted and wanted to give up the attempt, but she asked for one more chance. If she failed after three times around the ring she would quit.

"So I went around once, I went around twice. I heard my father call one, two. Then suddenly, at the third turn, over I went in a real somersault and after that I turned as many of them as I wanted."

Marrying Charles Robinson, treasurer of

The 1875 Montgomery Queen Circus was loaded with riding stars including Mollie Brown and Louise Tourniaire. Pfening Archives.

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HIGH TIDE OF SUCCESS!
THE GREAT QUEEN IN THE ASCENDANCY!

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THE GREAT REPRESENTATIVE SHOW OF CALIFORNIA.
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25 Cage Compartments of Wild Beasts & Birds

EMERY'S BRITISH CORNET BAND!
\$10,000 RIDING OF THE GREAT MR. JAMES ROBINSON
THE WORLD'S CHAMPION.
MISS MOLLIE BROWN,
Fifteen Years of Age, and the only Female Bareback Somersault Rider on the face of the Globe.
Mr. Queen offers \$10,000 to the person to produce her equal.

MR. W. E. GORMAN,
THE GREAT BAREBACK JOCKEY HURDLE RIDER.
Mr. Queen would have state, that he pays to Mr. JAMES ROBINSON, and W. E. GORMAN, as if Miss Mollie Brown, more money weekly, than the combined salary lists of any other half dozen shows in America. A SENSATION, BEYOND THEATRE! MONTGOMERY QUEEN has a MONUMENT OF CIRCUS TALENT, having secured all these.

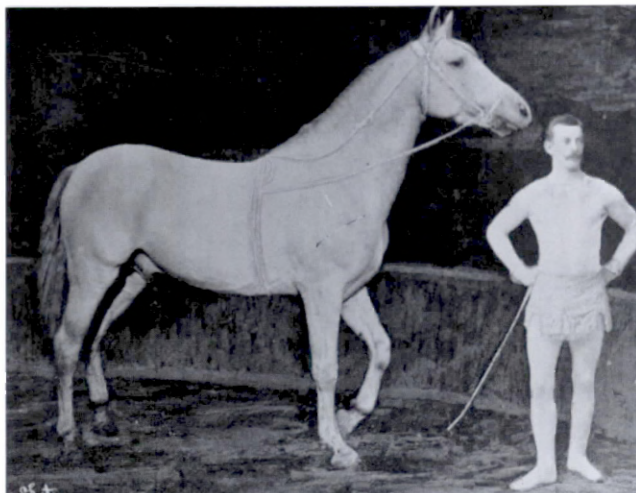
QUEEN'S RIDING CELEBRITIES.
MR. JAMES ROBINSON & SON, Shakespearean Equestrians.
MISS MOLLIE BROWN—Bareback Somersault Rider, and the best in the world.
MR. JAMES ROBINSON—Bareback Pistol Rider.
MR. LOUISE TOUNIAIRE, Riding Master—The Black Prince.
MR. W. E. GORMAN—Bareback Jockey Hurdle.
MASTER CLARENCE ROBINSON—Best Bareback Bullfinch Rider.
MASTER EUGENE ROBINSON—The School Pony.
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THE TWO FUGGLE EQUESTRIANS, Paul Brothers and Henry Lind, and 50 High Salaried Sensational Performers!
All in Real New Spectacles, Shattering and Difficult Feats.
No Lemniscas or Candy Vendors among people on the seats. Ice Wares supplied abundantly and without charge.

STREET DISPLAYS at 2 o'clock, every morning. TWO EXHIBITIONS DAILY. Doors open at 1 and 5 P. M.
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A: 1 mission, 50 Cents. Children under 9 years, 25 Cents.
Reserved Chairs, 75 Cents.

C. G. FELL and C. F. MYERS, Agents.



William DeMott, Louise's grandson, was another first class rider. He is pictured here on Frank Hall's Royal English Circus, a winter show, in 1895. Circus World Museum.

John Robinson 10 Big Shows on March 6, 1891, she retired from the circus in order to help his political career in Ohio and to go with him on the gold rush to Alaska. After a lapse of 15 years she returned to the sawdust ring with Barnum & Bailey for 1905 to 1907 where, with the help of her brother, she again took up where she had left off with her somersault riding. She trained as her new rosin-back a horse, "My Joe," which had been used to pull a milk wagon. While presenting her act the horse cut across the ring as she was in the air and her knee twisted as she came down on the wooden ring curb. She eventually completed the season and the two following seasons before she again retired on the urging of her mother. Eventually she sold the beloved "My Joe" to May Wirth when the Wirths were living at the Robinson home.

During her illustrious career, which was mostly on John Robinson's Circus, she spent the winter of 1888-89 with Orrin Bros. in Mexico, where she was personally honored by President Diaz. The following winter she and her brother, William DeMott, were among the cream of the circus acts that appeared at Olympia in London with the Barnum and Bailey Circus.

Mary Brewster, in writing of Josie in 1927, pointed out: "The code of its people [circus people] may be simpler—anyway it is more direct—than that of a more superficial society, but among them the shoddy in performance does not pass.

"No aristocracy has more earned its eminence. And though she has experienced so many other phases of existence since she first won her girlhood distinction as one of the most skilled and daring bareback riders of the world, in Josephine DeMott one encounters the true circus aristocrat."

William DeMott became a consummate principal, hurdle and somersault rider. His career extended from 1874 until 1925. He seemed to never grow old in the riding profession. His first wife, Katie Smith, a non professional at the time of their marriage, was taught to ride a superb manege act on the spotted Arabian stallion "Sultan" with Ringling Bros. Circus in 1896. His second wife, Eunice Stokes DeMott, who survived him, was a principal rider performing with him as early as 1910 and 1911. She also rode manege and did a double carrying act with her husband. After their riding careers were at an end, they conducted a school of dance and acrobatics in Baltimore, Maryland.

Louise DeMott, the younger sister, began her career on John Robinson's Circus in both principal riding acts and manege. After her marriage to Robert D. Stickney in 1893, she and her husband usually appeared on the same program. Later she concentrated on manege, both from the side saddle and from the 4-wheeled buggy or cart. She could do wonderful and beautifully executed feats in side saddle maneuvers. By 1909 Louise Stickney, then on Hagenbeck-Wallace, was one of the best known performers in the circus world. She entered the arena dressed all in white, riding in a high seated 4-wheeled cart, drawn by a milk white horse with a cake



Louise DeMott Stickney was the youngest of the three DeMott children who became well-known riders. She is shown here on Hagenbeck-Wallace, circa 1909. Pfening Archives.

walking white dog performing underneath. The audience always regarded the act with hearty applause. On leaving the circus, she and her husband appeared on the Keith circuit of Vaudeville. By 1923 they retired to North Platte, Nebraska where Robert was engaged in breaking high school and trick horses for a big horse dealer in that city.

In 1933 Robert D. Stickney, the first grandson of John Robinson and also a grandson of Sam P. Stickney, was running a Phillips gasoline station in Des Moines, Iowa. He died in 1941 and Louise retired in Des Moines with her son until her death in 1946.

A word of appreciation is due to the members of the staff of the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin for the use of their facilities and most particularly to Robert L. Parkinson, Research Director, for his continued enthusiastic encouragement and technical assistance. The references for this article were obtained chiefly from the *New York Clipper*, the *Billboard* and newspaper ads for the various circuses involved.

The author has recently retired as professor of chemistry at Bethany College in West Virginia. He now has in preparation a comprehensive listing of biographical information concerning thousands of circus equestrians in America and Europe dating to the eighteenth century.



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5000 Programs of circuses all over the world, beginning with the first circus performances with Astley's in the 1770s up to Ringling-Barnum in the 1980s.

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Notes on the History of Circus Tents

by Stuart Thayer

In April, 1793, John Bill Ricketts opened the first multi-act circus in America in a building in Philadelphia. He thereby began an era of circus performances in temporary arenas that lasted until J. Purdy Brown went on the road with the first canvas circus tent in 1825. The use of wooden arenas did not cease with Brown's adoption of the tent; it took another ten years for the canvas theatre to predominate.

J. Purdy Brown died in 1834, when he was about thirty-five years old. He apparently left no autobiographical notes, thus we do not know how he came to be the first showman to use a tent. The fact that he had it in his first season as a proprietor, and that he travelled far and wide in the country (oddly, never in his native New York State, nor in New England), leads us to conjecture that he struck upon the idea as a means by which he might cover a lot of territory. In other words, he planned not only a circus, but a *tented* circus that would allow him greater range.

If Brown's original tent lasted two seasons, it was a sixty-foot round top. T.B. Nathans saw it in the fall of 1826, and so described it:

Nathan A. Howes, Aaron Turner and Sylvester Reynolds were partners in 1826, in the first circus venture for all of them. As with Brown, they had a tent in their first season. A chronicler wrote:

The canvas was first raised in (Brewster, New York) near the present residence of William Storm. It was made of material then known as Russian duck and was designed by Nathan A. Howes. No performance was given at the time mentioned, but people came from all the surrounding towns to see the tent and there was great speculation as to the number of yards of cloth used in its manufacture.

After several days spent in handling the canvas, it was decided to give a performance under it. For this performance the tent was pitched on a lot nearly opposite "Stonehenge," the present palatial residence of Seth B. Howes. The exhibition was given on town meeting day, April, 1826.²

Later in 1826, the third tent came into use, a fifty-foot round top on Fogg, Quick and Mead's Washington Circus, which was playing in the southern states.³ Also in 1826, Sam Tatnall advertised "Pavilion Circus," in Philadelphia. This was in Tivoli Garden, one of the early outdoor amusement places common in large cities in the early nineteenth century. Because of the nature of the place and the fact that the circus did not travel, we

Unequaled in EUROPE or AMERICA



PURDY, WELCH, MACOMBER & Co's. Immense Menagerie of rare BEASTS and BIRDS, occupying 24 spacious wagons, in which are conveyed a great variety of rare specimens of natural history, never before seen in this country.

The cavalcade consists of upwards of SIXTY SPLENDID GRAY HORSES, and requires the aid of forty men to complete its operations.

The animals to be arranged in two extensive Pavilions, adequate to contain 4000 persons, all at the same time, with seats constructed expressly for ladies and children.

The proprietors feel confident, that with this extensive arrangement, together with the UNEQUALLED TALENT OF THE WASHINGTON MILITARY BAND OF

MUSIC,

(From Philadelphia,) who are not surpassed by any other in America, they cannot fail of eliciting a general support and rendering universal satisfaction.

Admittance only 25 cents.

The above will be exhibited at WM. REED'S, Chester county Hotel, on Friday April 4th, 1834, (for one day only) hours of exhibition, from 1 o'clock, till 4 P. M.

Tents became advertising features in 1834. This ad for Purdy, Welch, Macomber & Co. claimed two tents with seating for 4000. From *American Republican and Chester County Democrat*, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1 April 1834. Pfening Archives.

surmise that this was a wood-walled arena with a canvas top.

Hugh Lindsay, a clown, travelled with John Miller's menagerie in the early eighteen-twenties. In 1859, he published an autobiography which states, if we read it correctly, that Miller had a tent in 1825. Miller's caravan was more than a menagerie, yet less than a circus. He had Lindsay as clown, Dan Minnich as acrobat and walked the tight-rope himself. Lindsay's dating is not specific, nor very clear to us, therefore we urge caution in accepting 1825 as the first year they performed in a tent.⁴

With all this sudden introduction of canvas in 1825 and 1826, one would expect its



Manager.—JOHN W. SMITH.

Agent.—H. M. WHITBECK.

THIS MONSTER ESTABLISHMENT
The Largest and Grandest in the World.

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Entertainments, of the Highest Order.

THE TRAPPINGS AND HOUSINGS OF INCOMPARABLE ELEGANCE.

The Costumes and Paraphernalia of Classic Designs.

25 Superb, Spirited, Well Trained
RING HORSES.

35 Carriages of Inconceivable
Sumptuousness!

40 Sets of Harness of Transcendent Splendour!

THE LEVIATHAN

DOUBLE WATER PROOF PAVILION!

Seating 4000 Persons with unparalleled Comfort.

Brilliantly Illuminated by 350 Powerful Reflectors.

A PRINCELY FORTUNE

Has been profusely lavished, and the service of 100 MECHANICS AND ARTISANS!

Of acknowledged Taste and Ingenuity, kept in constant requisition for Five Months, in designing and Executing the Appurtenances and Properties of this Gigantic Scheme, in a style of Unprecedented Magnificence, resulting in the most exquisite Mechanical Gems, and the most gratifying Chief d'œuvres of American Skill.

KENDALL'S BRASS BAND.

15 Picked Musicians, in Lustrous Uniforms, of a celebrity in both Hemispheres to which no other band aspires, led by the IMMORTAL EDWARD KENDALL, whose fame as the MAGIC BUGLER, has penetrated every circle to which music has access, at once gives tone to the pure and admirable amusements of the Monster Circus, whether in leading the IMMENSELY EXTENDED PROCESSION in the GORGEOUS COLOSSAL MUSIC CAR or awakening the echoes of the streets while MOUNTED ON 15 RICHLY CAPARISONED STEEDS, or metamorphosing the performance into a

SOIRÉE MUSICALE!

not the least attractive feature in which will be the never to be forgotten SOLO UPON HIS MAGIC SILVER BUGLE.

This ad for Gilbert Spalding's North American Circus in 1847 is the earliest known illustration of a tent with quarter-poles. Pfening Archives.

use to grow, but such was not the case. There are references to Benjamin Brown having a tent in 1828 and 1829. Tatnall was connected with a Pavilion Circus in the same years. Benjamin Brown's "Royal Pavilion Circus" visited the Caribbean in 1830 and 1831 and in his list of assets is a centerpole.

The usual practice was to buy a centerpole at each stand, since the small dray wagons that circuses used would not accommodate anything that long. The tents were all push-pole rigged, of course, and a fifteen to twenty-foot pole sufficed.

George F. Bailey is on record as saying that Aaron Turner used a ninety-foot top in 1830. In 1831 both Fogg & Stickney and Captain Page had the term "pavilion circus" in their ads. In 1833, Hugh Lindsay and Nathan Miller took out a small circus for which they "got a new canvas," according to Lindsay.⁵

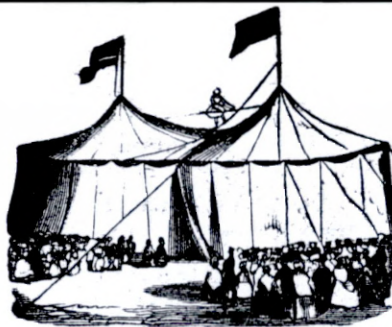
Some circuses were still appearing only in wooden arenas in the late 1820's and early 1830's, some used buildings in the winter and tents in the summer, and still others used side-walls, open to the sky. From the wording in advertisements, we can usually identify those in buildings, but no notice has ever been found indicating that a circus was using side-walls. The appearance of ads stating "pavilion circus" would seem to be attempts to distinguish between a tent and an open-air arrangement. Certainly, we cannot be far from the truth if we assume that a stand in a small town—Portsmouth, Ohio, for instance—is definitely not in a temporary wooden building. It would also seem safe to state that no one-day stand took place in such a structure.

The word "pavilion" was seventeenth-century usage for a building of light construction used for pleasure or amusement. The question rises that since such structures as the Brighton Pavilion or Astley's Pavilion in Wyck Street, London, were surely not tents, why should Brown and his contemporaries use of the word indicate anything other than a building? The word "tent" was known and used, after all. Why did he not say that his arena was a canvas tent?

The proof of the use of the word "pavilion" as meaning a canvas tent would seem to lie in the progressive use of the word. No circus ad prior to 1850 (the limit of this research) uses the word "tent." Only "pavilion" can be found. The earliest use of the word "tent" in connection with a menagerie appears in 1832; with a circus in 1847. Both references are newspaper comment, not advertisements.⁶ Even after the clear establishment, by iconography, of the use of the canvas tent, the word "pavilion" was in exclusive use in advertisements.

Having so little information from the showmen (more properly, from the showmen's ads), through 1833, we find, in 1834, a sudden plethora of tent descriptions, most of them from multi-tented menageries. One tent may have been so common as not to be worth mentioning, but when two, and even three, tents came into use, it was worth pointing out.

Gregory, Washburn & Co., which was a combination of two small animal shows, had two pavilions in 1834, and a capacity of 4,000



THE JOE PENTLAND CIRCUS

AUGMENTED AND IMPROVED,

And composed of all

NOVEL FEATURES,

Entirely dissimilar in character, and vastly superior to any Establishment now travelling. The great mass of sterling beauties offered in this Circus precludes the possibility of our giving a detailed description of the Performers or Performances. The large Posters, Illustrated papers, pictorial bills etc., furnishing all the necessary particulars. A brief enumeration of the STARS will satisfy the public of the paramount excellence of the great

PENTLAND CIRCUS.

In each and every Entertainment the public will have an opportunity of seeing

MME. LOUISE.

The peerless and Dashing Equestrienne.

MR. R. HEMMINGS,

The greatest Somerset Rider in the world, and Tight Rope Phenomenon, the wonder and admiration of the Old World, and his first season in America. The distinguishing novelty is

EPH. HORN,

The first and only Ethiopian Clown in the world, whose rich gem of genius and humor have made him a BLACK STAR, brilliant as anthracite coal, and popular from Maine to New Orleans. Purely original in all he says and does, EPH. HORN stands alone and unapproachable amongst all the delineators of Ethiopian character.

FRED. WILSON,

Of Provincial celebrity, will sing, tumble, and achieve great things, including the YORKSHIRE CLOG DANCE.

Messrs. King & Smith,

As Acrobats, Gymnasts, and Athletes, have also been secured, and will present amongst other features, the TIRPLE TRAPAZE on three horses, also the difficult feat of the ELASTIQUE PERCHE & FLYING ORB. Mr. King will effect his Triumphs of the Trampoline, in the execution of which he will accomplish his Flying Leaps over Files of Men and Drove of Horses.

MR. WM. AYNAR,

The celebrated American Clown, and graphic Scene Rider, who as PETE JENKINS, the AMATEUR EQUESTRIAN, is justly celebrated in all the principal cities in the Union.

MR. NELLVILLE,

Will ride his Terrific Hurdle Leaping Act.

MR. SAMUEL JACKSON

The greatest Tenor Drummer in the world, is also attached to our magnificent brass Band.

Masters Henry, and

Ferdinand will contribute their Classic Poses,—while a triple organization of Leapers, Vaulters, Tumblers, Voltiguers, Riders, Dancers, &c., will be daily offered in Pleasing and Graceful Animations.

The whole concluding with a Laughable

PANTOMIMIC SPECTACLE.



persons. For an extra 12½ cents, the public could view a cosmorama of the world, one of those long paintings mounted on rollers and usually fixed inside a wagon the side of which let down. The cosmorama was most likely in the second tent.

J.R. and Wm. Howe, Jr. & Co. also had two tents, in one of which Saunders G.K. Nellis, the armless man, could be viewed. Twelve-and-a-half cents was asked for this as well.

Purdy, Welch, Macomber & Co. had two tents and a capacity of 4,000. They offered an exhibition of paintings and engravings in one of them.

Three of these caravans had three pavilions each. June, Titus, Angevine & Co. started the season advertising a tent 170 × 85, thirty feet high. Later, they spoke of three tents, 80 × 120 (an eighty with one forty, in modern parlance). They carried an exhibit of wax figures and a fifteen-foot anaconda as extra attractions, but surely they didn't need three tents for that. Different notices said they had between twenty-nine and thirty-six wagons, perhaps two-thirds of them cages. Thus, we could assume that they had two tents of cages and one of other attractions.

Purdy, Welch & Co. also had an exhibit of paintings and engravings and as many as twenty cages. They had three tents and a capacity of 6,000 people.

Macomber, Welch & Co. claimed 120,000 square feet of canvas in three tents. They had seventy-five animals, but no extra exhibits.

Raymond & Ogden was the only 1834 menagerie to have but one tent, and admit to it. Their capacity claim used the figures 600-800.

Five of these caravans also introduced bandwagons in 1834, something not known prior thereto. Having multi-tent shows and bandwagons come on the scene in the same year makes us wonder if there wasn't collusion between the managers even prior to the establishment of The Zoological Institute in January of the following year.

The reader will have noticed that tent capacity figures seem to center at about 2,000 persons per pavilion. This would include up to five hundred seats on the "ladies' side" of the ring. In actuality, if 2,000 persons crowded into one of these tents, it would be difficult to see the displays. There are some references to complaints that the tents were so crowded as to make the visit uncomfortable. The cages would be in a large circle at the side-walls and the ring in the center. A menagerie ring would not need to be as large as a circus ring, since their acts were mainly monkeys riding Shetland ponies. Fifteen hundred people would seem, from reviews, to be thought a large crowd.

Howes, Sands & Co.'s circus had a sixty-foot round top in 1834, with a twenty-foot dressing tent. When they were combined with the Tippoo Sultan menagerie in the Zoological Institute in 1835, they had two hundred-foot round tops.

By the 1850s illustrations of tents were fairly common in newspaper ads. Generally they were used as a backdrop in illustrating the free act as is the case in this 1858 Joe Pentland Circus ad. Pfening Archives.

Aaron Turner was in the Institute only the first season. In 1836, he went back to his own circus and in that year had a seventy-five-foot round. He had a forty-foot ring, leaving fifteen feet on each side for seats, which may well have been only four or five tiers high.⁷ By 1842 he had a hundred-foot round top.

Once the Zoological Institute collapsed, the reference to tent number and size was apparently academic, as so little appears. It became the usual thing to have an aftershow in a separate pavilion, which one entered from the main tent for an extra charge. Thus, most menageries had two tents, most circuses (which didn't ordinarily have extra exhibits) one.

In 1839, June, Titus, Angevine & Co.'s circus valued their canvas at \$500, their poles at \$100, and their seats at \$100.⁸ The 1840 version of S.H. Nichols' Victory Arena used a bright red tent; in 1842 he had a 150 x 80 pavilion. Rockwell & Stone's 1842 and 1844 tent was a seventy-five foot round accompanied by a fifty-foot side tent. Gilbert Spalding carried a ninety-foot round in 1844 and had several stands at which people were turned away after 2,000 tickets were sold. Rufus Welch brought out a tent 140 feet long in 1845. The largest tent used to that time, according to the ads, was on Seth B. Howes' Howes' & Co.'s Great United States Circus in 1847. The show drew large crowds wherever it went. For the first time, two entrances were offered, one for single men, one for couples.

As the tents grew in size, still having but one centerpole, the problem of having cloth ceilings arose. If the seats were more than five or six rows high, the heads of the people on the top row were very close to the canvas and if the cloth was stretched, by age or dampness, it was possible that it hung so low as to obscure sight. Gilbert R. Spalding solved this by inventing the quarter-pole. By inserting these between the side-walls and the centerpole, he raised the canvas so that all could see. Further, he was now able to raise the number of tiers in his bleachers (to eleven, it is said) and therefore, sell more tickets. Generally, Spalding is credited with doing this in 1850. We think this comes from his obituary in the 17 April 1880, *New York Clipper*. However, his advertisements in 1847, one of which we reproduce here, show a tent with quarter-poles. Nothing is mentioned in the text of any of his ads. Fred Dahlinger has suggested that the name "quarter-poles" implies that there were four of them and that they divided the tent into four parts.

These woodcuts of tents are the earliest renderings of circus tents we've found. Of course, showmen didn't expect the public to come to the grounds to see the tent; that is why their ads featured equestrians and clowns. A few tents appear in advertising in the 1850's. Shows that had ascension acts as free outdoor exhibits often pictured the wire-walker going up the wire stretched from ground to the top of the centerpole. None of the several examples from the 1850's,

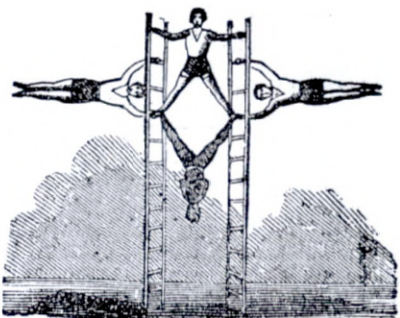
In 1854 Levi North's ads showed his tents. Note lack of quarter-poles. From *The Item*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 30 September 1854. Pfening Archives.

PROFESSOR MCFARLAND'S Grand Aerial Ascension on a Single Wire



To the utmost height of the Towering Pavilion of LEVI J. NORTH'S CIRCUS, will take place a few minutes previous to the Circus performance, on every clear day. The ascension will not take place during a rain or a rain wind.

The Circus performance takes place on all occasions, without regard to weather.



LEVI J. NORTH'S COLOSSAL CIRCUS; from the National Amphitheatre, Philad'a. This stupendous establishment, at once the largest and most magnificent in the world, comprising artists from every quarter of the globe, and an immense stud of horses, will exhibit at Harrisburg, on Wednesday, October 4th.

ADMISSION—TWENTY FIVE CENTS.

Upon this occasion, the following celebrated performers, who stand without equals in Europe and America, will appear:

Mr. LEVI J. NORTH, the distinguished Equestrian.

Mr. BURNEL RUNNELS, the great Double and Quadruple Horseman.

Professor JAMES MCFARLAND, the unapproachable Tight Rope performer.

SIGNOR CAPPANINO, the eminent Naturalist, will introduce his wonderful

RUSSIAN BEARS in feats of Dancing, Wrestling, Chariot-racing, &c.

LITTLE VICTORIA NORTH, the most Youthful, Graceful and interesting Artist of the present age.

MASTER JENNINGS, in his beautiful Act of the Pases Plastiques.

MONSIEUR EDGAR, the renowned and wonderful performer on the Crescent Cord, and thrower of Double Somersets.

MASTER WILLIE, the daring young Horseman in the great Act of the Hurdle Race.

MR. ARCHER will perform his Act of the Revolving Globe.

BEN JENNINGS, Clown to the Circle, will open his inexhaustible Budget of Fun, dispensing a profusion of Laughing Philosophy, Bon Mots, Hits at the Times, Fresh Jokes, Comical Sayings, Repartees, Sympathy, Satire, Sentiment and Stump Speeches, Galvanized Grins, Fantastic Grotesques, Love Ditties and Soft Yarns, which he will distribute to the laughter-loving multitude with prodigal liberality.

N. B. The proprietor respectfully calls the attention of the public to his bills. What is advertised on them, he performs.

Will also perform at Carlisle, on Monday, October 2nd. and at Mechanicsburg, on Tuesday, October 3rd. C. C. PELL, Agent.

however, pictures tents with quarter-poles. It may have been that only the largest tents could make good use of them.

We said that the advertising referred to tents as pavilions. The circus men themselves used the word "canvas" when speaking of tents, thus making that word operate to describe both the object and its substance. The 1842 June, Titus, Angevine & Co. route book for its western division lists a "canvas director," one J.C.A. Hobby. We have found no earlier reference to someone charged with handling the tent. By 1863, the *Clipper* was referring to "boss canvasman" and canvasmen. In the 1870's their names were listed along with other members of the staff.

The phrase "top canvas" is occasionally seen. We think it is a corruption of "topped canvas," to distinguish a tent from a side-wall arrangement. From top canvas comes our modern term "top," meaning tent.

The tent was the mark of the travelling circus; it is difficult to imagine what other type of theatre the showmen might have used. It was inexpensive, simple of design, easy to transport and simple to assemble. It provided the essentials of cover, privacy, and expandability. It has been the visual and emotional essence of the circus for over a hundred and sixty years.

Footnotes

1. Stuart Thayer, "The Nathans, a Circus Family," *Bandwagon*, xxix:2 (1985), p. 24.
2. Brewster Standard, 25 February 1887. This information was provided by Leslie Symington, researcher, Southeast Museum, Brewster, New York.
3. Stuart Thayer, "Trouping in Alabama in 1827," *Bandwagon*, xxvi:2 (1982), p. 20.
4. *History of the Life, Travel and Incidents of Col. Hugh Lindsay, the celebrated Comedian* (n.p.), Philadelphia (1859), p. 25.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *New Hampshire Spectator* (Newton, NH), 11 August 1832; unidentified Cumberland, Maryland newspaper quoting from *Georgetown Advocate* (n.d.), 1847. Information supplied by James Stegall.
7. George S. Cole in the 1905 John Robinson Circus route book.
8. List in vertical files, Somers Historical Society, Somers, New York.

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